

THE JOY OF REPENTANCE

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
ABSTRACT.....	VII
CHAPTER 1–REFRESHMENT FOR THE SOUL.....	1
A GODLY DOCTOR	1
PEOPLE THINK REPENTANCE IS NEGATIVE.....	3
REPENTANCE–THE MOST POSITIVE WORD IN THE BIBLE	7
ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE DISCOURAGED	8
POSITIVE ACTION	11
REPENTANCE AND REFORM	14
HISTORICAL REPENTANCE AND REFORM	18
A JOYFUL ENCOUNTER	23
CHAPTER 2–THE PROCESS AND MEANING OF REPENTANCE	27
THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE.....	28
THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE	30
CHAPTER 3–THE WRONGNESS OF SIN.....	36
STEP ONE IN THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE: “GOD, I AM WRONG.”	36
ADMITTING TO GOD, “I AM WRONG”	37
SIN: AGAINST GOD	39
SIN CAUSES GOD TO DESTROY	42
THE COST OF SIN	43
GOD REVEALS SIN TO REDEEM, NOT TO CONDEMN	46
CHAPTER 4–GODLY SORROW	49
STEP TWO IN THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE: “GOD, I AM SORRY FOR MY SIN.”	49
WORLDLY SORROW	50

GODLY SORROW’S SOURCE.....	51
WHAT IS GODLY SORROW?	59
DESIRING GODLY SORROW.....	67
PROTECTION	68
CHAPTER 5—GOD FORGIVE ME.....	72
STEP THREE IN THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE: “GOD, PLEASE FORGIVE MY SIN.”	72
THE GUILT OF SIN	73
TACKLING GUILT ON YOUR OWN	76
THE FREEDOM OF FORGIVENESS	82
NEEDING CHANGE BUT RELUCTANT.....	84
CHAPTER 6—GOD, CLEANSE ME	88
STEP FOUR IN THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE: “GOD, CLEANSE ME.”	88
THE MEANING OF CLEANSING	91
CLEANSING RESTORES A RELATIONSHIP.....	95
A NEW BEGINNING	100
PAST CHARACTER	101
CHAPTER 7—GOD, EMPOWER ME.....	106
STEP FIVE IN THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE: GOD, EMPOWER ME	106
NOT BY OUR OWN STRENGTH.....	111
STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS.....	114
INEXPENSIVE BUT USEFUL	118
CHAPTER 8—GOD’S UNNOTICED.....	126
UNDER THE INFLUENCE.....	128
LUCIUS BUNYAN COMPTON.....	131
AN UNNOTICED FARMER	140
MOMS	143
THE COLLINS’ IMPACT.....	145
LUXURY TO REPENT.....	149
STEPHEN GRELLAT.....	150
OTHER UNNOTICED.....	151
YOUR LIFE.....	154

APPENDIX ONE.....	156
APPENDIX TWO.....	164
APPENDIX THREE	167
APPENDIX FOUR	173
APPENDIX FIVE	177
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	178
VITA.....	184

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Dedication

To the glory of God for all He has done in redeeming my life for His Glory!

To the multitude of God's people who have invested their lives in me so that I might benefit from their wisdom, guidance, and mentoring.

To those unnoticed and unnoticeable by man but noticed by God as His Servants. As this book reveals, some will never know how tremendously God used them to help me understand the joyful nature of repentance.

Abstract

The Joy of Repentance

Revival is the work of God brought to the heart of believers through the work of repentance. Repentance is always present in true revival. Many, though, do not understand the positive work of repentance and therefore avoid discussion or application of repentance to their lives. Negative attitudes toward sin and repentance discourage believers from experiencing personal revival. As a result, confession of sin seems to be common while repentance is rare.

Though sin truly is negative, repentance is the most positive word in the Bible. While the process of repentance is sometimes painful, the result of being back in fellowship with God brings great joy. Believers who make the wonderful discovery that repentance is a refreshing of the soul understand that joyful living is the result.

Repentance is the only way to be purged from sin. If repentance is not pursued, the only alternative is rebellion from God resulting in hopelessness and loss of joy. God's people must learn that they are simply a *repentant* prayer away from a restored and joyful relationship with God.

This book will approach the practicality of repentance through biblical and real-life illustrations to help the common person become educated in the nature and process of repentance encouraging them to be used by God in revival.

Chapter One

Refreshment for the Soul

Confession of sin is common. Repentance of sin is rare. If a person could be relieved of the dangers that sin brings to life such as depression, discouragement, lack of joy, absence of peace, guilt, bitterness, and resentment, why would they choose to live with sin? Sin that is confessed brings relief to life, but confession alone does not free a person from the oppression of sin. While repentance, the turning away from sin and the turning toward a godly life, will not free a person from the results and consequences of sin, it will free him from the guilt and tyranny of sin.

A Godly Doctor

Shortly after completing my university education, I began my first experience serving as a full-time associate pastor. Excitement permeated my life as God had allowed me to serve Him in such a role. While serving at the church, I was given the privilege of attending seminary. And if that was not enough to keep my schedule full, I was also married and had a young child.

Christian education was my major assignment at the church. I had been trained for years to be a good minister of Christian education. All the resources and tools available to a leader were in my library. While I was thankful that this assignment was mine, those people just did not realize how helpful I could be to them. Immaturity was present in my life, but only recognized by others; not me!

Assignments in seminary, church, and at home were in abundance, but I was a hard worker and enjoyed doing the things I had been trained to do. However, I was quite amazed that the members of the congregation did not appreciate all that I COULD do to help them grow in their Christian education. During the first year of service I had mapped out a plan to help completely reorganize our Bible study structure, beginning with senior adults. That is when I discovered the truth of the Scriptures which state, “There is a way *that seems* right to a man, but its end *is* the way of death” (Prov. 14:12).¹ Death seemed to be the easy way out of dealing with “those” people down at “that” church!

Severe headaches, a twitching eye, and sleepless nights began to dominate my life. I could not sit still. Worry continually stirred my mind. Months went by with these symptoms that would not let me rest. Finally, I made a decision to see a doctor. My head ached so much that all I could discern was that I must have a brain tumor.

The appointed time came for me to see the doctor. He was a godly man who was a member of another church in the community. Sharing the details of my situation was embarrassing to me. As I tried to convince the doctor that I had a severe physical problem, the examination began. He looked into my eyes, listened to my heart, took my blood pressure, and performed all the other exam essentials. After the physical examination the doctor asked me a question I had not expected. He asked, “What is going on in your life as a pastor?”

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

It did not take me long to explain to him how *those* people down at *that* church were treating me. After all, they hired me to lead their Christian education departments and now they would not do what I asked them to do!

After hearing my complaints for a few minutes the doctor said he had good news for me. I thought, “Great!” He said he had two prescriptions for me that would help and that I could choose which one to take. Willing and ready, I asked what they were. He said, “First, I have tranquilizers that will help you calm down. The other choice is that you can go back to your church and find a place to get alone with God. Then, repent to God for not depending on Him to provide joy and peace in the midst of a difficult situation.”

Advice like that is never pleasant to hear but sometimes is necessary. I left the office and went back to the church. I went upstairs and found a small room where no one but God would hear me. Crying out to God, I admitted that I had sinned. Repentance toward God was my cure. Within a few days, my symptoms were gone!

The bottom line? Joy comes to a repentant heart.

People Think Repentance Is Negative

If this is the case, then why do people practice confession but ignore repentance? The answer rests in the perception that repentance is a negative rather than a positive event in life. The concept of joy rarely comes to mind when one thinks about repentance. If it did, I suspect people would be glad to consider repentance quickly. Joy, however, is almost a secret yet primary gift that flows from repentance. Revival would be a greater subject of conversation if believers understood that repentance can be the gateway to great joy in their lives. God has used all kinds of people to influence repentance and

revival resulting in great joy. The positive product of repentance resulting in great joy and tremendous impact can come through a well-known, outspoken person or the shy and unnoticed individual.

The Psalmist understood the joy that comes from a right relationship with God. “I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope” (Ps. 16:8-9). The heart is glad, the body is at rest, and the mouth rejoices when you know God will not abandon you. God will fill you with joy if you are in His presence living and rejoicing in fellowship with Him.

Many seek joy from the LORD but do not receive it. Why? Chasing joy without having a daily relationship with Christ will leave you frustrated. According to John 14:15-16, the presence of peace and joy comes to the believer when you follow Christ’s instructions, “If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.”

When discouraging disobedience is present in your life, joy is absent. Returning to God in obedience draws joy closer. Psalm 19 gives a perfect understanding of the relationship between obedience and joy.

The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether. More to be desired *are they* than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, *And* in keeping them *there is* great reward. Who can understand *his* errors? Cleanse me from secret *faults*. (Ps. 19:7-12)

The words of God are perfect. If a person reads and obeys these words, the soul will be revived. God's Word is the key that gives direction for everyday life, and direction in life brings security and peace. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life..." God's words are the person of Christ—Truth. His Word is alive and brings confidence. Even when you cannot rely on anyone or anything else, you can trust His Word. The words of God give joy to the heart. They are radiant and give light to the eyes. You can see God in a person by the radiant power of Christ in his or her eyes. By keeping His words you are rewarded, forgiven, and cleansed from all your sin. To know Christ in a daily walk of obedience will give you immeasurable joy!

Can there be a revival of repentance that would restore the joy of salvation to God's people?² The answer is yes! Negative thinking about repentance, though, could be a roadblock to believing and recognizing that joy can come from repentance. God's people must understand that repentance is *not* a word in the Bible used by God to bring destruction and discouragement. Repentance brings life, joy, love, and a deeper fellowship with God and His people. Revival is the work of God brought to the heart of believers through repentance. Repentance is always present in true revival. Revival may have several common elements, but revival will not be present without the positive element of repentance.

Avoiding the discussion of how to deal with sin and repentance is common because a proper understanding of the positive work of repentance is relatively unknown.

²Personal repentance lays a foundation for corporate repentance. If individuals do not understand personal repentance they will not understand how to participate in corporate repentance. For a thorough study on corporate repentance, review the following books: Henry T. Blackaby, and Claude W. King. *Fresh Encounter: Experiencing God in Revival and Spiritual Awakening*, Broadman/Holman Publishers, 1996. Henry T. Blackaby and Claude W. King. *Fresh Encounter: God's Pattern for Revival and Spiritual Awakening*, LifeWay Press, 1993. Henry T. Blackaby and Claude W. King. *Fresh Encounter: A Plumb Line for God's People*, LifeWay Press, 1993.

Application of repentance to one's life will be absent if proper understanding is absent.

Negative attitudes toward sin and repentance will discourage believers from experiencing personal revival. As a result, confession of sin becomes common while repentance is rare.

Believers receive much of their education on the subject of repentance from hearing or reading sermons. Messages of repentance are much more likely to be accepted if delivered from a heart of love rather than from an angry heart. Unfortunately, much teaching on repentance has been delivered from leaders who are angry with the people or whose message threatens damnation. Confusion sets in and the believer resists rather than embraces a true biblical view of repentance. William Douglas Chamberlain, a professor of New Testament studies stated,

Plagues and suffering do not produce repentance, but it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance (Rom. 2:4). God does not save men by intimidation and terror, but by love and grace.³

He continues sharing that "Jesus offered citizenship in the Kingdom, not the menace of hell, as the motive for repentance."⁴

Chamberlain further accentuates the issue when he says,

The Christian is not a man driven to do right by fear of a scourge; the Christian is motivated by the Spirit of God within. When Jesus preached repentance, he offered opportunities for service; his followers have often coupled repentance with threats of damnation. Jesus said, "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men." To hear some of Jesus' followers, one would think he said, "Follow me or you will go to hell."⁵

³ William Douglas Chamberlain, *The Meaning of Repentance*, (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1943), 161.

⁴ Ibid, 20.

⁵ Ibid, 20-21.

Though sin truly is negative and damnation does follow for those who do not turn to God through Jesus Christ, repentance is the most positive word in the Bible and brings life, not death, to those who embrace it. While the process of repentance is sometimes painful, the result of being back in fellowship with God brings great joy. Believers who make the wonderful discovery that repentance is refreshment for the soul understand that joyful living is the result.

Repentance—The Most Positive Word in the Bible

In the first chapter of the first book of the New Testament, Scripture states, “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). The reason Jesus came to this earth was to save His people from sin. Positive love from God sent His Son to help His people.

Jesus’ first message stated, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). The last message from Jesus to His disciples before He ascended to the Father as stated in Luke 24:46-47 was, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

The express purpose for which Christ came, the nature of His life, and the message He left behind for His disciples shows that repentance is for healing and joy, not for destruction. Thomas Watson,⁶ a Puritan minister educated at Emmanuel College in Cambridge, understood this when he said, “Moist tears dry up sin and quench the wrath of God. Repentance is the cherisher of piety, the procurer of mercy.”⁷

⁶ Thomas Watson was a noted author of Puritan writings during the mid 1600’s.

⁷ Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 7.

The word *repentance* is an often misunderstood term among believers. Some believe that repentance is only applicable to those who need a relationship with Jesus Christ. Others believe it is related to any person—whether a believer or not—who has sinned against God.

Is repentance negative? If so, why is it negative? What background and teaching has influenced this? Questions such as these must be explored to see whether a proper biblical view of repentance is in the heart of the possessor.

Encouragement for the Discouraged

“For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls” (Heb. 12:3). “Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*” (1 Cor. 9:23-24).

Set aside all sin but run the race with patience and endurance. Be sure that you do not run the race for the LORD Jesus Christ with anxiety and weakness. If you try to live the Christian life by your own human abilities, you will lose the race. The Christian life is a human impossibility to live. Since it is impossible by human strength, one must “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

Jesus was able to endure His race (the cross) because of the joy set before him. What joy? How could Jesus be joyful when he was about to be killed? He was joyful because He was providing life for the people He loved. These people He loved did not deserve life, but His love was so great that He provided a way of escape from this world!

When you become weary in dealing with difficulties in life, remember how a perfect Savior endured the persecution of sinners against Him—for you! Reflecting on His provision for sin will strengthen your mind and heart toward the task that is set before you.

Encouragement brings life, but so does repentance! Receiving encouragement from your LORD or a friend is wonderful, but encouragement will not remove sin from the heart. Only repentance can clean the heart and mind and place you back in fellowship with your LORD. Do not misunderstand, though. Repentance may be simple, but it is not easy.

Thomas Watson was a remarkable man who understood that repentance was not easy. His understanding was rooted in a deep walk with his LORD.⁸ He stated the difficulty of repentance saying:

Let it not be said that repentance is not difficult. Things that are excellent deserve labour. Will not a man dig for gold in the ore though it makes him sweat? It is better to go with difficulty to heaven than with ease to hell. What would the damned give that they might have a herald sent to them from God to proclaim mercy upon their repentance?⁹

⁸ C. H. Spurgeon said of Thomas Watson in a brief memoir from: *A Body of Divinity*, (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2003), viii.

He was a man of considerable learning, a popular, but judicious preacher (*if one may judge from his writings*), and eminent in the gift of prayer. Of this, the following anecdote is a sufficient proof. Once on a lecture day, before the Bartholomew Act took place, the learned Bishop Richardson came to hear him at St Stephen's, who was much pleased with his sermon, but especially with his prayer after it, so that he followed him home to give him thanks, and earnestly desired a copy of his prayer. "Alas!" (said Mr. Watson) "that is what I cannot give, for I do not use to pen my prayers; it was no studied thing, but uttered, *pro re nata*, as God enabled me, from the abundance of my heart and affections." Upon which the good Bishop went away wondering that any man could pray in that manner extempore.

⁹ Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, 8.

On October 1, 1879 Mrs. W. B. Caton¹⁰ left a wonderful home in the eastern part of the early-forming American continent to journey toward Kansas. She knew that the journey would involve great hardships as they ventured across the country headed for what they believed to be their new dream. They traveled hundreds of miles at the pace of only a few miles per day. Many died on the journey. Their journey did not begin with the thought that the travel across the land would be peaceful and absent from any difficulties. Facing the possibility of deadly winters, Indian attacks, robbers, wild animals, and disease, they remained faithful to the task. Life with wealth and abundance was their goal.

Christians also have a goal, but it is far different than wealth and abundance. A life of joy, peace, love, patience, and loving the LORD with all their heart, soul, and mind are but a few of the benefits of a repentant life. Endurance in Christ through difficulties will produce rest for the soul.

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence...” (Eph. 1:7-8). In Jesus we have redemption through His blood—the forgiveness of sins according to His riches in glory. Jesus came to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Matthew and Paul explain the very reason why Jesus came, yet many in our day do not want to deal with sin. But that is precisely why Jesus came, so that we would have a way to deal with our sin. What a marvelous provision in that He gives the forgiveness of sin according to His riches in glory! No other riches could pay

¹⁰ Mrs. W. B. Caton was one of the many strong women who helped to pioneer America. See Joanna L. Stratton, *Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), pp. 44-45.

the price for our sin. No other riches could equal the massive power required to deal with sin. Redemption does not come from man's wealth. Man's wealth cannot buy peace, love, or joy. Redemption comes through the wealth of the blood of Jesus. Not just anyone's blood could redeem. The blood of Christ was perfect and sinless. He gave riches from glory to pay the price for our sin. Thank God for paying such a great price to provide redemption! Meditate on God's provision and refreshment will come to the soul. On the other hand, to become insensitive to His provision will bring discouragement and weariness. "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7).

Positive Action

"Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders *his* conduct *aright* I will show the salvation of God" (Ps. 50:23).

Several years ago, I was invited to speak at a church on the subject of repentance. Prior to my speaking, the choir swayed as they lifted their hands to sing. It was a very loud, joyous, emotional type of service.

While sharing the message of repentance, the congregation became very quiet. I read the passage in Mark 7:21-22, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness."

By the end of the service, it was obvious God was speaking deeply to His people. As the invitation was given to come to the altar and repent over any sin God had revealed, the altar was filled with people. Almost all of the people who had shared in the praise time, including the choir, were weeping before God. One woman (the liveliest in

the choir) was planning on divorcing her husband because he would not allow her to hold fellowships in their home. During the prayer time, she repented of her attitude and changed her plans.

After the invitation, the pastor asked me to explain to the church what God had done that night. He was not sure of all that had taken place but knew that only God could have moved in such a powerful way. I asked the pastor if he was sure he wanted me to share my thoughts. He was sure.

First, I asked the congregation, “Can a person worship God if their heart is not clean before Him?” The people agreed that it would not be real worship if a person’s heart was full of known sin. I then asked, “Since most of the congregation was repenting of known sin at the conclusion of the service, would you agree that the first part of the service that was filled with praise songs was not really worship?” They agreed it was not.

How often does this happen in Christians’ lives? Have we become comfortable singing to God even though our hearts may be unclean? If so, then worship has not occurred. That is what the psalmist expresses in Psalm 50:23, “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders *his* conduct *aright* I will show the salvation of God.”

It takes much more than sacrifice to please God. Psalm 51:17 states, “The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. God, You will not despise a broken and humbled heart.” There must be holy living and a right heart attitude in order to please God. Righteousness far exceeds any ritual. In the Old Testament, when the sacrificial system was set in place, it was a symbol of what God wanted to do in the heart of man. Sacrifice was a symbol of what man’s heart should represent toward God.

In the Old Testament, people brought their offering to the priest. Giving the life of the most perfect animal they possessed was from the heart. They understood that real sacrifice meant to give something that was very precious to them. Fire consumed the sacrifice on the altar to the extent that only ashes and smoke remained. When smoke from the offering went up toward heaven, God said it was a holy aroma to his nostrils. It was a holy aroma because God knew the heart of the people who gave it. He knew they loved Him and wanted to give the best they could.

But, after years of sacrifice, the hearts of the people began to depart. No longer did the sacrifice really mean anything to them. It was only a ritual. There was no righteousness involved. Instead of giving their best, they began to give animals that were undesirable.

Prophets warned the people that their hearts had departed. Sacrifices had become an unholy stench to God. God knew their hearts were far from His intent for genuine sacrifice. They were no longer giving their best. They were practicing ritual, not righteousness.

Righteousness means to serve God with all your heart. I have often heard people make promises to God while in the hospital. They said something like this: "If God will just get me out of this hospital, I'll really serve him." Sure enough, their health improved and they left the hospital but ignored their promise to God. There was no meaning in their promises, just meaningless words.

According to Psalm 50, judgment is inevitable and unavoidable. We serve a mighty, awesome God (as is evident in Ps. 50:1) but one thing we must realize is that He is not silent toward His people. He brings justice. In Psalm 50:5-6, we see the

righteousness of God as a judge, “Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself *is* Judge.” Eventually, everyone on earth will testify that God is a righteous and infallible judge.

God was and is still helping His people understand that sacrifice will not make up for wrong living. If our heart is not positive in our actions, the sacrifice is simply ritual and God does not desire it.

Samuel said, “Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22).

To obey is better than sacrifice. God wanted the hearts of His people, not their animals. What right do we have to recite God’s laws or take His covenant on our lips if we do not do what we profess? Our religious talk is only as good as our ethical walk.

It is one thing to stand before others singing praise and glorifying God with our lips. It is quite another to bring our lives under submission to God so that our praise is preceded with right conduct in our life.

God is looking for righteousness over ritual. He wants our lives and our hearts and our actions. Jesus warned us that, “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me” (Matt. 15:8).

Repentance and Reform

John the Baptist was preparing the way for our LORD. He came with an authentic and practical yet powerful message. He came preaching repentance for the remission of sins.

John was the forerunner of Christ and this message would launch the whole context of Jesus beginning his public ministry. Jesus' public ministry began right after He had been tempted in the wilderness by Satan and after He heard of the death of John the Baptist. Nothing, though, could detract Jesus from His mission. Jesus went immediately to the next assignment where He began preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17).

Distraction from his God-given assignment was not in John the Baptist's mindset either. His responsibility would be to prepare the way for Christ. John began with a strong, stern, and precise message. Assigned to John was the privilege of preaching repentance for the remission of sins. Reform would come to every person who received and practiced repentance. Joy would motivate everyone who repented and was reformed to carry out Christ's instructions for life.

Personal experiences of revival result in acts of reform. Change in a person's life testifies to true repentance. Repenting and returning to God will produce change in life. John the Baptist began with this message of change.

Certainly repentance can happen in the life of an unbeliever and bring about the joyful work of salvation resulting in the understanding that Christ is their personal Savior. Most often in the Bible, however, the word "repentance" refers to God's people—those who already have a relationship with Christ. Therefore, repentance in the lives of those who do have a relationship with Christ is a necessity. Examination of day-by-day activities, thoughts, and attitudes reveal a need for turning to God for help each and every day.

Lack of reform in a person's life after praying what he or she believes is a repentant prayer reveals confession of sin but not repentance. Absence of a change in life once sins are confessed and forgiveness asked for may demonstrate a sincerely offered prayer even though repentance did not take place. The path of a repentant heart is a reformed heart, a changed heart. Incredible differences will occur in one's life as a result of authentic repentance.

John the Baptist's ministry in Luke 3:3-4 is described by stating that he "...went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet..." Following, in Luke 3:4-6, is a quote from Isaiah 40:3-5.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
 "Prepare the way of the LORD;
 Make straight in the desert
 A highway for our God.
 Every valley shall be exalted
 And every mountain and hill brought low;
 The crooked places shall be made straight
 And the rough places smooth;
 The glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
 And all flesh shall see *it* together;
 For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Highways provide the most direct route one can take to a desired destination. Construction areas are to be avoided if one wants to make a trip quickly. Smooth, straight roads are always appreciated when one desires what is waiting at the end of the trip. God said there needed to be a straight highway over which He could go to His people to present the truth. Crooked roads and mountainous passes will prevent many from going in that direction. Jesus came to heal the broken-hearted. He came to heal the wounded.

He came to help the feeble, the ones who could barely walk, and the ones who needed assistance on a journey. But before He could do that, there needed to be a highway over which God could go to His people.

If there were crooked roads, hills, and valleys, it would be difficult for a person to maneuver. If there were mountains, it would be difficult for him to climb those mountains. The mountains ought to be brought low, the valleys must be filled in, and the crooked roads need to be made straight.

Hindrances for people returning to God emerge when they observe the lives of believers who are not living for God. If a person observes evidence of another believer failing to read the Bible yet acting as though he is spiritual, it deters him further. Prayerlessness and unwillingness to share Christ with others further drives him off the highway that leads to the LORD. Life without joy is a stumbling block to a person who needs to come to Christ or return to Him.

John guides the people through the message by helping them see that every crooked way must be made straight. Fill in the valleys and bring down the mountains so that even the weakest person can see the difference Christ makes. Individual lives become a highway of holiness over which God can go to share who He is.

Unbelievers give excuses like, "I would like to go to church, but that church down there is full of hypocrites!" What they mean is that the lives of some of the people in church are different on Sunday than how they see them living every other day of the week. Their life is a stumbling block for unbelievers to come to God. People who need to return to God cannot seem to travel beyond the lives of those they are observing.

Parents often ask children to do things that they do not model. Have you ever demanded from another believer to be something that you have really not been? Probably. We must ask God to remove those inconsistencies from our life, and repentance is the only way. The simplicity of living a daily life with Christ is what we must practice so that our lives are not a roadblock for people coming to Him.

John states in Luke 3:8, “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance...” True repentance of sin in life will result in an observably changed life. The Greek word for repent, *metanoia*,¹¹ means to think differently, to reconsider. There ought to be some evidence of a change of mind, of thinking differently, some fruit of repentance or reform.

Historical Repentance and Reform

Throughout American history, revival and repentance became a basis on which much of the community and even the nation experienced political, economic, and social reform. Great examples are found in history that show how a changed life brings reform personally and to a community or church.

¹¹ Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Peabody, Massachusetts, 2003), pp. 405-406—*metanoia*; *metanoia*, *metanoias*, *heæ* (*metanoëoæ*), *a change of mind*: as it appears in one who repents of a purpose he has formed or of something he has done, Heb. 12:17 on which see *heuriskoæ*, 3 ((Thucydides 3, 36, 3); Polybius 4, 66, 7; Plutarch, Peric. c. 10; mor., p. 26 a.; *teæs adelfoktonias metanoia*, Josephus, Antiquities 13, 11, 3); especially the change of mind of those who have begun to abhor their errors and misdeeds, and have determined to enter upon a better course of life, so that it embraces both a recognition of sin and sorrow for it and hearty amendment, the tokens and effects of which are good deeds (Lactantius, 6, 24, 6 would have it rendered in Latin by *resipiscentia*) (A.V. *repentance*): Matt. 3:8, 11; Luke 3:8, (16 Lachmann); Luke 15:7; 24:47; Acts 26:20; *baptisma metanoias*, a baptism binding its subjects to repentance (Winer's Grammar, sec. 30, 2 b.), Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 13:24; 19:4; (*heæ eis* (ton) *Theon metanoia*, Acts 20:21, see *metanoëoæ*, at the end); *didonai tini metanoian*, to give one the ability to repent, or to cause him to repent, Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25; *tina eis metanoian kalein*, Luke 5:32, and Rec. in Matt. 9:13; Mark 2:17; *agein*, Rom. 2:4 (Josephus, Antiquities 4, 6, 10 at the end); *anakainizein*, Heb. 6:6; *choæreæσαι eis metanoian*, to come to the point of repenting, or be brought to repentance, 2 Pet. 3:9 (but see *choæreæoæ*, 1 at the end); *metanoia apo nekroæn ergoæn*, that change of mind by which we turn from, desist from, etc. Heb. 6:1 (Buttmann, 322 (277)); used merely of the improved spiritual state resulting from deep sorrow for sin, 2 Cor. 7:9f (Sir. 44:16; WisSol 11:24 (23); 12:10,19; Or. Man. 7f ((cf. the Septuagint edition Tdf. Prolog., p. 112f)); Philo, quæd det. pot. insid. sec. 26 at the beginning; Antoninus 8, 10; (Cebes, tab. 10 at the end).)

Charles G. Finney was a practicing lawyer. While studying the Bible in law school, God called him to a new life. “Finney was to practice law but in studying the Bible to understand Mosaic legislation had a profound conversion. The next morning he said to a client, ‘Deacon, I have a retainer from the LORD Jesus Christ to plead his cause and I cannot plead yours.’”¹² A profound reform happened in his life. He later became a professor and president at Oberlin College in Ohio. Under much influence by Finney, the college believed it must speak out against slavery. “Finney even argued that if the church fails to speak out on such an issue she is perjured, and the Spirit of God departs from her.”¹³ Reform was a part of Finney’s life as he walked with God.

Arthur Tappan was a reformed businessman. “The major financial backing and organizational leadership behind the abolitionist crusade derived from the man who founded Dun and Bradstreet.”¹⁴ “In New York the Tappan brothers later became the major financial supporters of evangelist Charles G. Finney.”¹⁵

Tappan became a highway of holiness over which no one would stumble because of his testimony. He founded the Journal of Commerce. He authored a pamphlet *Is It Right to Be Rich?* and was the major contributor to the American Bible Society. Tappan was a godly businessman whose life was accentuated by holiness which God used to reform wrongs in life.

Repentance does not bring divorce, prostitution, drunkenness, drug addiction, unforgiveness, anger, rage, adultery, or destruction of families. Repentance brings reform

¹² Donald W. Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976), 16.

¹³ Ibid, 18.

¹⁴ Ibid, 63.

¹⁵ Ibid, 64.

to all of these situations. Great joy is found when repentance begins to restore relationships, soften hearts, and develop loving peaceful people.

John continued to preach saying, “Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So the people asked him, saying, ‘What shall we do then?’” (Luke 3:9b-10). When he finished preaching, the people responded and wanted to know what to do.

John gave them simple, practical answers so that they could respond to their heart of repentance. First he instructed the common people saying, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise” (Luke 3:11). John gave simple, practical, real evidence of the fruit of repentance. If you have abundance and you do not give to those in need, then there is no fruit. If you say you repented but your life did not change, there was no reform. It is impossible to repent and not have joyful reform.

Next, tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to John, “Teacher, what shall we do?” (Luke 3:12). Tax collectors were the scourges of the earth; nobody liked them. But these tax collectors responded to the message, their lives were changed, and they wanted to know what to do. Resentment was not their motive; joy was their motive. John responded with simple but profound guidelines, “Collect no more than what is appointed for you” (Luke 3:13). Simple, real, and fair is the expression of reform.

Lastly, the soldiers came to him and said, “‘And what shall we do?’ So he said to them, ‘Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages’” (Luke 3:14). Reform influences the areas of life that are real, practical, and obvious to daily life. When you truly repent, your joyous heart will give you the desire to do the

right thing. When Christ speaks to your life and moves you to repent, the fruit of that repentance will be a willing heart that says, “God, what should I do next?”

One of the most common areas of needed repentance in the lives of believers is related to the consistency of studying God’s Word. If a person has difficulty reading God’s Word, then repentance is needed. Repenting of avoiding God’s Word in your life will not make you resent God’s Word nor bring depression. Repentance will bring a joy that moves you to love God’s Word more than ever and will provide the motivation and desire to begin the process of studying God’s Word.

Many of God’s people are inconsistent in reading God’s Word because they do not think it is a sin dreadful enough to require repentance. Instead of actually repenting, they merely try reforming by proclaiming, “Well, I’m going to do better next year.” God’s Word facilitates the development of a personal relationship with Him. To ignore God by avoiding His Word is a serious condition of the heart. What you do next will show the fruit of repentance.

Repentance is not an easy process to submit to, but the result is wonderful joy.

Contrasting repentance and reform will help a person know whether or not he has truly repented. Review the chart below and ask God to examine your soul. If true repentance has taken place, then reform will be the result.

Table 1-1: Repentance and Reform

REPENTANCE (Returning to God)	REFORM (What Shall I Do?)
God, forgive me for not reading my Bible.	Begin reading your Bible daily.
God, I am sorry for not praying.	Begin daily prayer times.
God, I repent of avoiding worship with other believers.	Begin attending worship again and ask others to help you stay faithful.
God, forgive me for not giving my resources to You.	Begin giving to your local church and other ministries.
God, I repent of my prejudiced spirit.	Begin showing kindness to those different from you.
God, forgive me for not giving my all at the workplace.	Begin doing your work as to the LORD and realize when leaving work you have given your best.
God, I repent of not showing respect for my parents and other authorities.	Begin a natural willingness to follow your authorities...in the LORD.
God, forgive me of my anger.	Let others see a more gentle spirit in your life.
God, I am sorry that I have been so selfish.	Begin putting needs of others first.
God, I repent of lustful thinking.	Consciously think on things that are good and holy and avoid reading or watching things you should not.
God, forgive me of complaining.	Recognize that you are now content with your situation.

True repentance brings wonderful abundant life. Scripture states, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:11).

A Joyful Encounter

Over the years my wife and I have led many discipleship groups. A friend came to our home and requested that we lead a group of her friends and neighbors through a book entitled *The Heart of the Problem*.¹⁶ The first night of our meeting, we became acquainted with a lady named Joy. Joy was a very shy lady who could not even look you in the eye and say, “Hello.”

Joy and her husband listened as I introduced our course of study. As I began my introduction I said, “If sin is your problem, there is no human remedy.” I then began to go over the five steps of repentance as recorded in *The Heart of the Problem*.

Three weeks later Joy and her husband sent word to me by another group member that they would not be back. They said they did not need this course of study because their problem was not sin. I never said their problem was sin. I simply had stated in the first session that “if your problem is sin...there is no human remedy.” Joy and her husband dropped out of the group. However, the story does not end here.

Joy grew up in a home of a medical doctor. When she was a young girl several family members sexually abused her numerous times. She was an artist and all of her paintings were dark and dreary. Joy had been seeing a psychiatrist every week for six years. At the time we began our group, Joy was thirty-five years old and her life was anything but joyful. As she was trying to deal with this problem, she once again sent word to me stating, “Kerry, I have been abused. The problem is not with me. It is what someone did to me and I am just working through that process.” Now, I agree that people

¹⁶ Henry Brandt and Kerry L. Skinner. *The Heart of the Problem*. (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1997).

who abuse others the way Joy was should be strongly punished. But the sad fact is that punishing the offender will not change the heart of the victim.

Upon the group's completion of *The Heart of the Problem*, a lady in the group decided to begin a group in her church. Joy and her family attended the same church, so she and her husband decided to try this course one more time. They came to the class and made it through the first few weeks. One week, the group leader was going to be out of town. She called me to see if I could fill in. I agreed to do this having no idea that Joy and her husband were in the group. The study that week was on forgiveness. In that particular chapter of the book, the author tells of a missionary couple whose son was captured and killed by soldiers. He explained how God had helped them process the deep unforgiveness they had in their heart. It was a wonderful story of how the grace of God provided forgiveness.

As Joy studied her lesson that week, God broke her heart as she read the story about those missionaries. She cried out to God saying, "Oh God, I have been saying all of these years that I have forgiven these people, but I never have. God, would you grant to me a spirit of forgiveness to forgive my offenders?" After repenting, Joy was a changed person!

The next day Joy went to see her psychiatrist for her weekly appointment. She walked into the psychiatrist's office and he said, "Joy, what has happened to you? You look totally different." Joy said, "Let me tell you what happened. I repented and God put my whole life back together." The next week Joy began blacking out. She called her psychiatrist. He said, "Joy, based on what we talked about last week, there is no

explanation other than your body is rejecting all of this medicine. I have to get you off of this because you do not need it anymore.”

Joy decided to teach *The Heart of the Problem* at her church. Only five people showed up on the first night. It was pretty obvious that no one wanted to learn from Joy. They knew that her name had not matched her life. She began the class by walking in with a sack full of prescription bottles. She threw them out on the floor in front of the group and said, “I want to tell you how God healed me of all of this in one day when I chose to repent.” After this session more and more people began coming to Joy’s group. If Joy could be helped, maybe they too could get help.

About a year later, my wife, Elaine, had a surprise birthday party for me. She told me we were having a reunion with our Bible study group. We were at the party and I looked around to see who was there. I recognized everyone except one lady. I absolutely did not know who she was. To my surprise, I found out that this lady was Joy. I was shocked because she looked nothing like the Joy I had met. As everyone was talking and visiting, Joy said, “Can I share with the group what God has been doing in my life?” She was beaming! Joy shared her testimony with the group. She then said, “It is as if my husband and I are on our honeymoon. I never knew life could be so good. By the way, my paintings are no longer dark and dreary. They are full of life and joy. In the past, my children would come home from school and find me curled up on the couch as though disengaged from the world. The children were so wild and out of control that they were put on Ritalin. My children are no longer on Ritalin. They just needed a mom.”

Joy talked on and on about all God was doing in her life. She was later invited to a convention of medical doctors and psychiatrists to give her testimony of what can

change in the human heart when the spirit changes. Joy's character now matched her name.

Repentance is a wonderful gift from God that brings joy as often as God's people turn back to Him. As Thomas Watson said, "Repentance is never out of season; it is of as frequent use as the artificer's tool or the soldier's weapon."¹⁷ True repentance results in a wonderful refreshment for the soul!

¹⁷ Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, 7.

Chapter Two

The Process and Meaning of Repentance

Remember the first time you tried to drive a vehicle with a manual transmission? There were many steps in the process that were critical to follow if the vehicle was to move forward. I remember trying to drive a 1966 Ford step-side pickup truck. My grandpa had bought the new truck for use on his farm. Learning to drive it was quite an experience. I was not out on a public road when I learned; I was in a pasture on the farm.

These were the steps I had to remember. First, put my left hand on the steering wheel. Second, place my right hand on the gearshift. Third, place my left foot on the clutch. Fourth, place my right foot on the accelerator or brake according to the situation at the time. Fifth, push the clutch to the floor with my left foot and move the gearshift to neutral, then toward me and down for first gear. Sixth, let out on the clutch slowly with my left foot while pushing down lightly on the gas with my right foot. Seventh, look out the front windshield to watch where I was going. Eighth, watch the rear view mirrors. The end result was that I watched the truck go up and down and then stall instead of going forward!

With all these steps I thought I would never learn the process of making a manual-transmission-powered vehicle move in a smooth and orderly motion. The process took quite a while to learn. But once I learned to drive that truck, it became automatic to me.

People who drive manual-transmission vehicles do not even think about the steps; they just get in the vehicle and enjoy going where they need to go. Steps for the process of driving are present but are not stumbling blocks for accomplishing the task.

Repentance should be that way for the believer. We should be so aware of sin and its wrongness that the minute we see our sin we quickly move through the process of repentance. Remember, though, that the prayer must be more than just a cry for help in time of crisis—the prayer must reflect a heart that desires to change.

The Process of Repentance

How long does a process take? A process requires as much time as it takes to accomplish a completed act. A process can happen quickly or could take twenty years or longer. How long does repentance take? Many believe that repentance takes a long time. Once a person has a sin problem in his life, he often is convinced that his problem is so complex that the situation will take a long time to correct. If the problem is sin, God is the only one who can resolve the problem. Jesus provided the only way to eradicate sin, and this provision is accessed through repentance. Ignoring a sin problem will only prolong the process of repentance.

Genuine repentance moves quickly, but the process to reach your destination of repentance may take a long time. The length of time it takes to repent depends on how long it takes a person to come to the place where he really wants to change. As believers, we must remember the simplicity of why Jesus came, "...and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Jesus never meant for repentance to take a long time. Rebellion, however, can last a lifetime but repentance does not have to. Repentance is a choice we now have through Christ our Savior.

It is important for us to understand that many go through a step toward repentance but do not complete the entire process necessary for repentance. Often people stop at this point in their prayer, “O LORD forgive me of my sins today.” Serious as they may be in wanting their sins to be forgiven, the question is—are they serious about changing their life to match a repentant prayer?

How many times have you prayed, “God forgive me for not reading my Bible consistently,” yet your life did not match the prayer and you went through another month of anemic Bible study? If a person lived out the complete process of repentance concerning the reading, study, and meditation on God’s Word, something would have changed. Rebellion is such a strong word. Avoiding the reading of God’s Word does not seem rebellious to most believers.¹ While it may be true that you are not openly saying, “God, I hate You and I’m not going to read Your Word,” what you do next after praying for forgiveness shows obedience or rebellion. If there is no reform in your life then the process of repentance has not yet been completed.

The next five chapters will guide you through five steps in the process of repentance. In a day where it seems that repentance is rare, understanding the entire process of repentance is critical. I was so strong-willed it took two years to deal with my particular sin of anger—it did not take God two years to deal with the sin. It took me two years to want to give up the sin—God only needed a few moments to cleanse a dirty heart.

The process of repentance has five steps.

1. Admitting to God, “I am wrong.”
2. Having godly sorrow for sin.

¹ John 8:31-32: “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

3. Asking God to forgive the sin.
4. Asking God to cleanse the sin.
5. Asking God to empower you with His Spirit.

The Meaning of Repentance

William Douglas Chamberlain, a man devoted to helping God's people understand repentance, wrote a book entitled *The Meaning of Repentance*.² He said, "Repentance does not bring the Kingdom; it prepares men to participate in it. Repentance is not a device for escaping hell; it is a preparation for co-operating with God's will on earth."³ If repentance helps us live out God's will while here on earth, that explains why repentance is a major theme in the New Testament.⁴ The forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist, came preaching repentance.⁵ Jesus' first message was to preach repentance. "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matt. 4:17). The very last words of Jesus to his disciples are found in Luke 24:47, "...and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Questions concerning the central theme of Jesus' coming and of His preaching should not be in doubt. Chamberlain said, "Next to the Resurrection, 'repentance' is the most frequent theme in The Acts."⁶ Repentance is a theme to be embraced, not rejected.

² William Douglas Chamberlain, *The Meaning of Repentance*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943).

³ Ibid, 19.

⁴ For a thorough work on repentance as a major theme in the New Testament, read Richard Owen Roberts, *Repentance: The First Word of the Gospel*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2002).

⁵ See Matt. 3:1-6; Mark 1:1-6; Luke 3:1-6.

⁶ Chamberlain, *The Meaning of Repentance*, 61.

Again, you must not lose sight of the positive nature of God's work through repentance. As noted in chapter 1, "Plagues and suffering do not produce repentance, but it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). God does not save men by intimidation and terror, but by love and grace.⁷

Repentance is the positive way in which to deal with the negative attributes of sin. The New Testament word for repentance is *metanoia*.⁸ To think differently afterwards, i.e. reconsider (morally, feel compunction)—repent—sums up the meaning of the word. This is far different than the word used for Judas' repentance. That word is *metamelomai*, meaning to care afterwards, to regret, to have a self-type of repentance. The message of repentance that John the Baptist and Jesus spoke of was such a change of life that wrongful actions of life were reformed. Chamberlain says, "What the Baptist meant by *repentance* is indicated in his words: 'Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance...' Repentance is to have a twofold issue: reformation in conduct, and transformation of mental outlook."⁹

Chamberlain explained further the meaning of Jesus speaking on repentance. This is a message the church needs to hear in our day. He said,

When Jesus sent forth the Twelve, "they went out, and preached that men should repent" (Mark 6:12). It was not enough, apparently, to cast out demons and to heal the sick; it was necessary to change men's thinking, to transfigure their aspirations and their ambitions. The Church has forgotten this, to its own confusion and frustration. Introspective agonizing over sin does very little good, if the old desires and ambitions which led the Christian into sin are left unchanged. Afflicting the soul and torturing the body do not remove the cause of the sins which men punish in themselves.

⁷ Ibid, 161.

⁸ See appendix for a listing of Scriptures related to repentance.

⁹ Chamberlain, *The Meaning of Repentance*, 52.

When the Twelve preached repentance, they were attacking the origin of sin. They called for a change in the life design of men.¹⁰

Repentance requires change in a person's life. You can know you are wrong about something and decide you will never do it again but that is not repentance. Just because you stop your wrongdoing does not mean that you have changed. Repentance requires a change of mind and a change of direction in your life.¹¹

If there is no change in the way a person lives, then repentance has not taken place. In Matthew 3, we read about John the Baptist preaching the message of repentance and baptizing those who believed. Verse 5 says, "Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins." In verse 7 we read that many Pharisees and Sadducees were also coming for baptism. John's response to these men was what some would describe as harsh. He strongly rebuked these men. Verses 7 and 8 states, "But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come.' Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with your repentance..." John knew that the Pharisees and Sadducees were like snakes. They could not be trusted. They were deceitful and

¹⁰ Ibid, 56.

¹¹ Ibid, 59. It is important to note the details of William Douglas Chamberlain's statements concerning this change of direction. He said, "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). In John 10:10, Jesus is represented as saying that he came that men might have life and have it more abundantly. These two statements are essentially one. A change of mind from the selfish human outlook to the self-giving mind of Christ leads to abundant living. As Jesus put it, "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it" (Mark 8:35). Self-seeking is self-destructive; self-giving results in self-discovery. Dr. John McDowell has said, "In religion as in astronomy everything depends on what you make the center." Ptolemaic astronomy made the earth the center of the universe; consequently all its conclusions were wrong. Unregenerate man makes his own desires and aspirations the center of his spiritual universe; so his conclusions are often just the opposite of those of the man who makes God the center of his aspirations. The pagan tries to bring God in line with his plans; the Christian says, "Not my will, but thine, be done." Christian repentance includes the discovery of this new center for life, the adopting of a new regulatory principle—the will of God, not the appetites of self.

hypocritical. They were not interested in a change of heart or a change of life. They were willing to be baptized and possibly even to confess their sins like the rest of the crowd but their motives were selfish. There was no desire nor did they see any need of a changed life. In order for repentance to be real and complete, there must be “fruit keeping with your repentance.” Paul clarified this further when he wrote, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Dr. Henry Brandt, a long time friend and writing partner, shared one of his most memorable stories with me that illustrates the change needed if repentance is to be real.¹²

Dr. Brandt had been teaching a conference in the Chicago area on how to lead the Spirit-filled life. After the final session of the conference, he and his wife went back to the hotel and had a good night’s rest. The next morning they got up, got ready, got dressed, had a good breakfast, checked out of the hotel, got in a nice, comfortable air-conditioned car and headed back home to Detroit. After driving for a while his wife said, “Henry, you are going the wrong way! You are headed back to Chicago. We’re supposed to be going home to Detroit.”

As Henry was telling me this story he said, “How do you respond when you have just finished leading a conference on how to live the Spirit-filled life and your wife tells you that you are wrong and you are convinced you are right?”

¹² This story is adapted from *The Heart of the Problem*, Henry Brandt and Kerry L. Skinner, (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1997) pp. 70-75 as well as personal conversations with Dr. Brandt. Dr. Henry Brandt is a writing partner for me and a noted Biblical counselor who has influenced many Christian ministries and authors for the good of the Kingdom of God.

He said, “I did like many of you do.” He told his wife, “Look, I grew up in Detroit. I’ve been to Detroit many times before. Don’t tell me how to get to Detroit! In fact, do you want to drive this car or do want me to drive this car?”

Henry said to me, “Kerry, here we were, two well-dressed, well-fed, educated, basically attractive, good-looking, mean, nasty people driving down the interstate.” Then he said they were driving along the interstate and came to one of those big green road signs. The sign confirmed, “Chicago, Next Exit.” Dr. Brandt now knew he was going the wrong way. What do you do when you have just stood your ground and held on to your rights and argued with your wife about your being right and then discover you are wrong? Henry told me, “Kerry, I have a PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy; I have a degree in engineering; I’ve been trained all my life how to take facts and make unemotional, logical, sequential decisions.” So, he said, “I looked at the exit sign and I chose to ignore it.”

He said, “Kerry, that’s not the worst part of the story. I chose to ignore two more exit signs before I turned around.”

When Dr. Brandt told me this story I thought about his actions. Dr. Brandt could have read the sign, acknowledged he was wrong, and stopped the car right there on the interstate. He could have put the car in park, turned off the ignition, placed the keys in his pocket and turned to his wife and said, “Are you satisfied? I am no longer going the wrong way.” That would have been true, but he would not have been going the right way in that case either. Just to stop your wrongdoing does not mean you have repented. Repentance means to see your wrongness, turn from going in the wrong direction, and begin to “...bear fruits worthy of repentance...” (Matthew 3:8).

After driving a while Dr. Brandt repented toward God and then asked his wife to forgive him. He told me that after he repented he could not wait for the next exit so he could turn around and start home. The amazing principle Dr. Brandt shared with me was this: “Kerry, repentance frees you to do the right thing!”

This practical five-step process of freedom (repentance) will now be explored in the following five chapters.

Chapter Three

The Wrongness of Sin

Step One in the Process of Repentance: “God, I Am Wrong.”

Suppose a child approached his dad and said, “Dad, I haven’t cleaned my room in 365 days. I know it is wrong because you made a rule about cleaning my room and taught me that to fail to clean my room was wrong. See you later, Dad, I’m going to the beach.” What is wrong with a child responding to his dad in that way? The child knows it is wrong but his actions have not changed. Just to know you are wrong does not mean you will change. To admit you are wrong is the first step in the process of repentance, but it is not repentance. Not only must you admit you are wrong, you must admit that this wrongness is a sin against God.

Christians are never like this child, are they? If believers are told they are wrong, or if they are under the teaching of God’s Word on Sunday and become convicted of their wrongness, they will change immediately, won’t they? Not necessarily. Knowledge of sin does not mean a person will repent. Simply knowing you are wrong is not enough.

Repentance requires that a person acknowledge his wrongness and then turn from his sin. Many believe that all they need to do when they are wrong is to think of others who are in a worse condition of sin and thereby relieve their own guilt. Some confess their wrongness and at the same time want to incriminate others. True repentance is concerned with one’s standing before God. Repentance confesses, “God, I am wrong

regardless of what anyone else has done.” The moment you say, “God, I am wrong but so are they,” you are trying to find a defense for remaining like you are. Jesus did not say in Mark 7:23, “All these evil things come from [other people] and defile a man.” He said, “All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” To go through the process of repentance, you must come to the place where you see your sin and its awfulness, admit your wrongness, and begin to move to the next step in the process of repentance.

Remember, the process of repentance is a process of five steps. 1–God, I am wrong; 2–God, I am sorry for my sin; 3–God, forgive me of my sin; 4–God, cleanse me of my sin; and 5–God, empower me with your Spirit.

Let’s examine the first step in the process of repentance.

Admitting to God, “I Am Wrong”

The first step in the process of repentance is to be able to say to God, “God, I am wrong; I have sinned.”

Most people do not like to say, “I am wrong.” Why? The essence of human nature is to do our own thing, to go our own way. Something within us resists admitting that we are wrong. Observation of daily living points out our weaknesses, our wrongness, but seldom do we make a conscious decision to observe ourselves. Rather, we choose to observe others and see their faults. Recall a time when you were in an argument with your spouse or close friend. You can stand your ground and be convinced that you are right! Giving all the evidence *why* you are right is not difficult. In fact, you can become rather persuasive with great passion. But have you ever stood your ground only to find out a few minutes later new information that proved your wrongness? Not many people would rush back into the presence of the spouse or friend and confess, “Oh, I just

discovered that I was wrong and I could not wait to tell you how wrong I was.” No, most people avoid confession. We do not like to admit facts concerning our wrongness.

Our grandson, Ashton, illustrated this truth. Ashton was attending a preschool Sunday School class at church. He was about two and one-half years old. While in the class that morning he had an encounter with another child and bit the child. When his mom came to take him home the teacher told her what had happened.

Ashton’s mom told him, “Ashton, when you get home you have to tell your dad what you did.”

When they arrived at home his dad, Jason, got down on his knees, eye to eye with Ashton, and asked, “Ashton, Mom told me what happened at church in Sunday School. Ashton, what did you do?”

Ashton said, “I didn’t hit.”

Jason said, “But Ashton, what did you do?”

Ashton said, “I didn’t push.”

Jason asked again, “But Ashton, what did you do?”

Ashton responded, “I didn’t spit.”

He never would admit what he had done wrong! That is the character of human nature. No one had to teach a little preschooler that—it is the innate character of human nature not to admit our wrongness.

King David knew that adultery and murder were wrong when he committed those sins. In fact, he knew those sins were wrong before he committed them. The simple truth of knowing these sins were wrong did not prevent him from doing wrong. While repentance is needed after one sins, David also needed a deep relationship with God that

encouraged him to “Walk in the Spirit, [so he should not] and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). A vibrant daily walk with God would have prevented him from giving in to temptation. Just because a person knows a particular action is wrong does not mean that a person will change. If the knowledge of wrongness caused us to repent then we would see much more evidence of repentance in our day. Knowing you are wrong is a step in the process of repentance, but it is not the complete process of repentance.

Sin: Against God

Sin is against God. People sometimes ask, “Why is what I’ve done a sin against God? After all, I committed adultery or I was resentful and bitter toward someone. I committed sin against a person, not God.” Psalm 51:4 states, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, *and* blameless when You judge.”¹ David admitted that his sin was against his God. What did David mean when he stated he had only sinned against God? He had committed adultery and then murder. Why would he say it is only against God that he has sinned? If you think back to the time when he was a shepherd boy you would not think of David as a person who would commit such awful sins. He was so close to God. He had such a sweet relationship with Him. What changed from that time of walking with God to committing adultery, deception, and murder? A broken fellowship between David and his LORD allowed him to fall to this lower standard of living. Nathan the prophet was sent by God to confront David with his sin. Prior to that confrontation it was obvious David had no intention of repenting. Much time had passed before David’s repentance. We know this because his son had been born from the adulterous affair before Nathan confronted

¹ See Appendix 1 for more Scriptures related to the wrongness of sin.

him. Up to that point in time he was simply covering his sin. But his major sin was that he had broken fellowship with God. Had David kept his close walk with God he would not have contemplated such wickedness. He sinned against God. He broke fellowship with Him. When he sinned against God it opened the door of his spirit for all kinds of things that were sins against people. Yet, his primary sin was against God.

The great Puritan writer Thomas Watson said,

Should men live forever, they would sin forever. Some think it hard that for the sins committed in a few years they should undergo perpetual torment, but here lies the justice and equity of it. It is because sinners have an everlasting principle of sin in them. Their stock of corruption would never be quite spent. They have a never-dying appetite to sin, which is justly punished with a never-dying worm.²

Watson goes on to say that, “Sin first tempts and then damns. It is first a fox and then a lion. Sin does to the sinner as Absalom did to Amnon. When his heart was merry with wine, then he killed him (2 Samuel 13:28). Sin’s last act is always tragic.”³

There is a depth to the wrongness of sin that overwhelms God’s people and results in great harm to the individual, friends, and family. Sin took a man after God’s own heart and made him willing to explore all of the extremes of sinfulness. His emotions overpowered the truth. If the truth had prevailed in his thinking, he would have seen the wrongness of his thoughts and desires and run toward God instead of running toward sin.

No one—not even a man after God’s own heart—is immune from sin. Proverbs 20:9 says, “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” No one can say that. Ecclesiastes 7:20 declares, “For *there is* not a just man on earth who does good

² Thomas Watson, *The Mischief of Sin*, (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1998), 69-70.

³ Ibid, 20.

and does not sin.” Jesus said in John 8:7, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” After Jesus made the statement, the people who had come to stone her walked away because they knew they were guilty of sin also. The impact and the wrongness of sin are clear in the Scriptures. Jesus continued in His teaching stating in John 15:22 “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.” Paul continued this theme in Romans 3:9 saying, “What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all! For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.” Paul then stated the fact that we are all wrong under sin when he said in Romans 3:23 “...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”

Most people know that sin is wrong, but do they really see it for its awfulness? One would think that if a person knew he was wrong then he would change, but that is not the case. Most of the time when people are wrong they try to hide it, reason it away, or simply try to ignore and forget it. If we saw the awfulness of sin from God’s perspective it would make a difference in how we live.

Did you know that natural gas is odorless and colorless? It is also deadly. Because it is so deadly, an ingredient called *mercaptan* is added to the gas so that its presence can be detected. If this ingredient were not added, it would be nearly impossible for you to detect a leak of natural gas coming from your stove, hot water heater, or furnace. This ingredient has a horrible smell but becomes a very valuable safety feature. If you were to walk into your home and smell this terrible odor, would you just continue to stay in the house and say, “There is a gas leak, but it is no big deal.” Of course not! You would get out of the house immediately and call 911 for help. The Scripture gives us much warning

about sin, the presence of it and the danger of it. Not to heed that warning will prove to be deadly.

Sin Causes God to Destroy

Sin causes people to deceive themselves. But not only is sin awful in its principle truth, it is awful in its effect in the life of a person. 1 John 1:8 exposes the deception sin causes by stating, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Look at what sin does. It causes God to destroy. In Genesis 18:20 the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave...” He went on to say He was going to destroy them. Why? Certainly not because He hated people, but because He knew the multiplication of unrestrained sin.

Many of you have read cases in the Old Testament where God killed many of His own people for their sin. Sometimes we think, “I don’t understand that. Why did He kill them?” There were some nations that sinned so greatly that God wiped them off the face of the earth. Why? Because God is God and we are not. He knew that to allow those actions to go on unchecked could allow future generations to keep falling and there might never be any correction. Remember when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Apostles about their possessions and God struck them dead? Some people wonder, “Why would God strike them dead and not strike everybody dead who lied?” Really what we should be saying is, “Isn’t God merciful that He doesn’t strike us all dead?” We have all lied. We have all broken the law and transgressed. But God saw the future and He knew if He did not deal with sin thoroughly in the early church then the purity and strength of the church to preserve the truth through the generations would be greatly weakened. In Exodus 32:31, “Moses returned to the LORD and said, ‘Oh these people have committed a

great sin and have made for themselves a god of gold.” In Exodus 32:35, the Scripture reveals, “So the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.” Did God hate the people? No! He knew what sin would do. He knew sin unchecked would bring on greater devastation than the consequences of His discipline. Repenting of sin will not cause the problems that living with sin will cause. Repentance brings healing.

The Cost of Sin

Sin devastates the body physically. Deuteronomy 9:18 states, “And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.” How would you like to face an angry God? Fortunately we do not have to. “Then he shall confess the sin which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, plus one fifth of it and give it to the one he has wronged” (Numbers 5:7). The cost of sin requires restitution plus doing something over and above what the actual sin caused.

Deuteronomy 24:16 says that, “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin.” How many times have you heard, “The sins of the fathers will be passed down to the children of the third and fourth generations”? Many times that has been taught out of context to scare people. People are told, “Look, this happened in your past and you cannot overcome it. You cannot get out of this because this is a curse of sin in your family.” But look at the mercy of God in the passage found in Exodus 20:5-6, “For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to

the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” The cycle of sin in a family can be broken as quickly as a repentant prayer occurs. Does it happen that many families keep the cycle of sin going? Absolutely. But this does not have to be the case because Scripture states: “A person shall be put to death for his own sin” (Deut. 24:16).

God does not punish one person for another person’s sin. However, sin does affect the lives of others. A child who is run down and killed by a drunk driver is an innocent victim of someone else’s sin. Our sin often comes at a great cost to others.

Psalms 38:18 states, “For I will declare my iniquity, I will be in anguish over my sin.” I know this to be true. I experienced two years of distress when I was so rebellious and unwilling to forgive someone that great anguish and turmoil ruled my life. I could not sleep. I could not enjoy a good meal. I could not enjoy life. Sin nearly destroyed me.

The cost of sin could prevent revival among God’s people. Revival involves God’s people returning to Him, not on lost people being converted. Spiritual awakening is what happens to lost people when God’s people are in a right relationship with God and are being used as His instrument of revival. No one can sin and expect it to not affect the rest of the Body of Christ. It does affect us. Take for example how the common cold affects the whole body. The entire body feels bad when a cold is present. No one else may know you have a cold but their lack of information about your cold does not mean the cold will not infect them if they get too close. Sin is like that. Sin can infect and affect an entire body of believers costing them an experience of true revival.

Proverbs 10:16 states, “The labor of the righteous leads to life. The wages of the wicked to sin.” If your right eye causes you to sin, what did Jesus say? “Pluck it out.” Did

He mean to really pull it out? I have not seen any Christians following through with this teaching lately. We know He did not mean to literally pull your eye out, but Jesus did mean that the wrongness of sin is serious. Sin is serious. Deal with the sin because the cost of it is to be cast into hell. Matthew 18:6 says, “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown in the sea.” Gossip is an example of how many children hear wrong judgmental statements that later causes them to sin. Are God’s people accountable for the sin of gossip? Absolutely! Yet some people think, “My life is fine,” but they have just talked about the deacon or the teacher down at THAT church. When you are around children and talking like that, you are causing little ones to sin and Jesus did not say that was a desirable position to find yourself in. In John 8:34, Jesus answered the religious leaders who were claiming their righteousness to be in their father Abraham when he said, “...most assuredly I say to you whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.”

It only takes a moment to fall into sin and its trap. Romans 5:12 states, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” The wages of sin is death. I have heard many people say, “I’ve committed sin and I am still alive.” When I begin to question them and ask them if they have much joy in their life, it usually becomes obvious that they have died to joy. When they became entrenched, as a slave of sin, they died to joy. They died to peace. They died to loving people. There are all kinds of ways a person can die other than physically. “For sin taking occasion by the commandment deceived me and by it killed me” (Rom. 7:11). “But exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13). That is so true! Sin

is so deceitful! Once you give in to sin, it affects your mind so that you begin thinking that what you are doing is okay. At first, your mind can tell you that this is the wrong thing to do, but your emotions can convince you to do it anyway. Then your mind follows your emotions and convinces you that you are okay. That is the deceitfulness of sin.

James 1:15 makes clear that, "...when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."

Early warnings to the reality of sin are found in the first book of the Bible.

Genesis 4:7 reveals, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it." Sin is always crouching at your door and it is ready to take over the moment you give in to it.

God Reveals Sin to Redeem, Not to Condemn

Paul clarified God's intent to use the law for teaching by stating,

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." (Rom. 5:20; 7:7)

Never forget that God has given a way to have full and abundant life. We do not have to live with the oppression of sin. The law helps us to see the way toward dealing with sin in our life. For us to walk in our own ways when we know the power of the resurrected Christ living in us is sin. There has to be recognition of sin if we are going to go through the process of dealing with wrongness in our life.

Suppose you washed your hands and then entered a large room full of people. If you held up your hands in front of a large group of people and asked them to look at your

hands they would appear clean. However, appearing clean is different than being clean. If a bright light was focused on your hands and maybe even if someone examined one of your hands under a magnifying glass, impurities would be revealed. The hand appears acceptable from a distance but close observation reveals there are some problems. God is like a bright light shining on your heart and mind. His light reveals all the impurities in your life. If sin is revealed, God then convicts you...not to discourage you but to redeem you!

What do you do when God shows you the impurities? Do you draw near to God and say, “Oh God, I see impurities. I see something that You see in me and I want to get rid of it. Will you help me with this?” If you do, God will help you. He can forgive you and cleanse you and empower you to walk a new way of life. Even though you have been cleansed, His bright light will reveal other impurities on another day. Gold can be refined by heat. Heat brings impurities to the surface. To bring impurities to the surface of gold is positive, not negative. If you can see the impurities, you can purify the gold. To see your sin can be positive if you choose to turn to God and ask Him to purify you.

When you are walking toward God in your journey with Him and He begins to show you your sin, that is positive. Purity allows you to come a little closer in your fellowship with God. As you come closer to Him, He will reveal other impurities—but not to condemn you. He is trying to improve His relationship with you. Rejoice! He is trying to draw you closer to Him. God is in the business of redeeming His people. Remember, “She will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

Once you see the wrongness of sin and admit your wrongness, you are ready for the next step in the process—to have a godly sorrow over your sin.

Chapter Four

Godly Sorrow

Step Two in the Process of Repentance: “God, I Am Sorry For My Sin.”

Suppose a child approached his dad the day after admitting he was wrong for failing to clean his room and said, “Dad, another day has gone by and I haven’t cleaned my room now for 366 days. Dad, you and I have always had a good relationship, we have been able to talk about almost anything, we do a lot of things together, and I have enjoyed that relationship, but Dad, I can tell that there is tension between us today. I know that I have not cleaned my room and I know it is wrong. Dad, I don’t like it that this is hurting our relationship. Dad, I just wanted to let you know that I am sorry for how this weakens our relationship. See you later, Dad, I’m going to the beach.”

The problem in this relationship is that the child says he is sorry, but his actions have not yet changed. The child knows that his actions are wrong because his dad told him it was wrong not to clean his room. He is sorry that his failure to follow his dad’s instructions has brought about a difficult situation for him.

What is wrong with a child responding to his dad in that way?

There is no genuine sorrow over his wrongness. If you say, “I know I am wrong, but I am not going to do anything about it”—there is no genuine sorrow about your wrongness. On the other hand, if sorrow is authentic, then the wrongness disturbs you from within. Your mind and heart will not be at peace. If you have a sorrow that is not

from God, you will live with your sin and prolong the problem. This son is only sorry for the consequences of his sin—not for his actual sin.

Worldly Sorrow

Worldly sorrow is unmistakably different than godly sorrow. Is it possible for you to say, “I am sorry,” but not mean it? Yes. What kind of sorrow is that? It is worldly sorrow, not godly sorrow. This type of sorrow has no intention of producing change, it is simply sorry that a situation exists, or sorry that the situation is bringing grief to life.

If you get into an argument with your boss and say some things you should not say, you know that the situation must be made right. When you get home after work and cool off, your thinking becomes clearer and you realize that you must apologize when you go back to work. An apology is needed to save your job. Apologizing to your boss and your boss accepting your apology is necessary but you do not have to mean what you say, you just have to say it. People are accustomed to saying, “I am sorry” yet not have any seriousness behind their apology. This is not godly sorrow but rather deception. It is absolutely possible to say, “I am sorry” and not mean it. Paul taught the Corinthian believers to distinguish the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow in 2 Corinthians 7:9 when he said, “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing”

Think about other places where the opposites are illustrated in Scripture. Jesus said, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of

Me will find it” (Matt. 16:25, HCSB¹). Also, “So the last will be first, and the first last” (Matt. 20:16, HCSB). Scripture illustrates the opposite of the world’s thinking about sorrow also. Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians that there was a godly sorrow that brings life but the sorrow of this world brings death and destruction.

Worldly sorrow in a marriage relationship will bring destruction. Suppose a husband commits the same offense toward his wife over and over again everyday for thirty days. Each day he does the same thing wrong. Every time the husband commits the offense the wife points it out. Each time he responds with, “I am sorry.” Tomorrow he does it again. That apology represents worldly sorrow and will do just what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:10²—“the sorrow of the world produces death.” Sorrow of this kind will kill personal relationships. It will also break fellowship with God if you respond to Him the same way. If you sin against God and you keep saying every day, “God I am sorry, I did it again,” but you do not change—your fellowship with God will be broken. How many times will people admit they are wrong before they change? Until they have a genuine godly sorrow over their sin.

Godly Sorrow’s Source

The word “godly” in 2 Cor. 7:10 is *theos*—meaning of uncertain affinity; a deity, or to be exceedingly godly.³ The word “sorrow” is *lupe*—meaning sadness, grief, or heaviness.⁴ Thayer sees this type of sorrow as a sorrow that is acceptable to God.⁵ The

¹ Verses marked HCSB are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible ® Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.

² See Appendix 2 for more Scriptures related to godly sorrow.

³ *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Iowa Falls, IA: Riverside Book and Bible House), 36.

⁴ *Ibid*, 45.

distinction between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow is the difference between what a human being sees as sorrow and what God accepts as sorrow over sin.

But where does this godly sorrow come from? From God of course! The truth is that godly sorrow is simple yet profound. If godly sorrow comes from God then people cannot, on their own, manufacture this sorrow. God grants this acceptable sorrow to a person who really desires to change. If change is not desired, then no amount of human sorrow can relieve the problem. Judas had this kind of sorrow but it was not enough to comfort him in his time of crisis. When God knows that a person desires to really change then He produces in us a grieving heart over our condition.

Consider your own life, since you have been a believer. Can you think of a time when God so convicted you of a particular sin that your heart was overwhelmed with sorrow toward God? Maybe you were broken by the fact that you had sinned against your LORD. You saw the wrongness, you were sorry that you had committed the sin, and you repented—asking God to forgive you and cleanse you. Since that time you have lived victorious over that sin issue. Not that you never committed the sin again but you have not lived in bondage to the sin since then.

If sin is a person's problem, there is no human remedy for sin. You cannot get rid of sin by pouring out your heart to a good friend and showing regret about your actions yet having no transformation in your life. You cannot rid yourself of sin by repressing it deep within your mind or by blaming it on everyone else. A friend can help direct you to know how to deal with sin, but only Jesus can save a person from sin. The single-minded purpose for why Jesus came was to save His people from their sins. The first message

⁵ Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Peabody, Massachusetts, 2003).

Jesus preached was to the people of God calling for them to repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand.⁶ Richard Owen Roberts said, “The first word of the gospel is not ‘love.’ It is not even ‘grace.’ The first word of the gospel is ‘repent.’”⁷ Even the last words of Christ in Luke 24:47 were a call for the disciples to preach repentance. Jesus said, “...and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” There is no question about the major focus of Jesus’ message. Though repentance is Jesus’ key message, if there is no godly sorrow over sin, there will be no repentance.

Lack of godly sorrow seems to be the reason why repentance is rare in most believers. Many resist repentance because they think it takes a long time and because they simply do not feel that they did anything so terrible that they should feel sorry. Many, though, feel bad and do not know why. Since the Holy Spirit lives within every born again believer, they will feel bad when they sin even if they do not know where the feeling is coming from. Others resist dealing with sin because they think it consumes too much of their time to work toward repentance, but we must remember, repentance does not have to take a long time—rebellion does. You can live with rebellion as long as you desire. Many have discovered what I have discovered—God will let me be as miserable as I want to be for as long as I want to remain miserable. God will not force repentance on anyone. He is waiting for us to be willing to change. In God’s great gift of love, He gave us a will, a choice—and He is waiting for us to make that choice—a choice to repent and return to Him.

⁶ Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15.

⁷ Richard Owen Roberts, *Repentance: The First Word of the Gospel*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2002), 23.

Are there problems in life that do not involve sin? Yes, there can be events that happen in life that do not result from your sin. Jesus talked with a man who had been blind since his birth. The disciples asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”⁸ Jesus said neither sinned. Suppose someone has wronged you—you did nothing to cause this person to wrong you. Even though you may be innocent, if you are not careful, you may become bitter or resentful and respond to wrongness with wrongness. When someone wrongs us, our response tends to be to lash out in vengeance. Justifying the action taken does not eliminate sin from being wrong. Godly sorrow is needed for repentance but as long as we can justify our wrongness, we will not see a need to change. Sorrow over the other person’s sin or our own sin is not the nature of human nature but rather the nature of God working in us. Paul taught clearly this truth by writing “...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

My wife is one example of someone who had been wronged. I will allow her to share her testimony of what happened and how it affected her.

I had just gone through major surgery and had been home from the hospital for a week. Up until that time I had not been alone. In fact, I was feeling smothered by everyone’s attention. My husband asked me if I would be all right while he and our little boy went to the Fair Grounds. Once a year, there was a large celebration called Dairy Day in this small Texas town. They wanted to go see what was taking place at Dairy Day so they left the house and I was left on my own.

⁸ See John 9:1-11.

The first thing I did was read my Bible and pour my heart out to God over some sin that He had shown me earlier that day. I received God's cleansing that day. It was so good to be alone and have that uninterrupted time with my LORD.

A man came to my door and asked me about some property behind our house that was for sale. I gave him the information he wanted and went back to reading my Bible and my devotional book. Suddenly, I felt like something was wrong. I felt as though a circle of evil was all around our house. I know that sounds strange to some but that is the best way I know to describe what I felt. I went back to a devotional book that I had just been reading along with my Bible and read a verse from Jeremiah. The book was "My Utmost for His Highest" by Oswald Chambers. That day, April 28, Chambers wrote about the life that is hidden in Christ. After reading the Scriptures and his explanation of this passage I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that God was with me and that He would protect me. At this moment I still had no idea as to what danger may have been lurking, but I knew God was present and would be with me in all situations and circumstances.

In a matter of minutes, the same man that had come to our home earlier forced his way into our house and attacked me. He tried to pull me into another room and I felt a set of arms embracing me. He could not move me. The man tried to push me down by pushing on my shoulders and calling me dirty names. I felt a set of hands under my arms, holding me up.

The Holy Spirit began to speak in that still small voice, saying, "Proclaim the name of Jesus. There is power in the name of Jesus." I said, "In the name of Jesus Christ you get out of here and leave me alone!" The man jumped backwards as though he had been shoved.

He said, "OK, OK, if you will forgive me and forget this, I will leave you alone and I won't hurt you."

I said, "OK."

He said, "Do you forgive me?"

My answer was, "Yes."

"Will you forget this and not call the police?"

My answer was "Yes."

He then asked me to shake his hand (to seal the promise). I shook his hand and he headed toward the door but he did not leave. He locked the door and came toward me again. He pushed me backwards over the small deep freeze. I felt as though I landed against a large soft cushion. He then put his hands around my neck and told me he would kill me if I screamed. I felt a set of hands under his hands protecting my neck.

Again, I heard that still small voice of the Holy Spirit say, "Proclaim the name of Jesus. There is power in the name of Jesus." Once again I said, "In the name of Jesus Christ you get out of here and leave me alone." The man jumped backwards as though he had been forcefully shoved.

He began to tremble and said, "If you will forgive me and you will forget this, I will leave you alone and I won't hurt you." I agreed to forgive him and did so with all of my heart. I promised I would not call the police and kept that promise. The man left and I was unharmed. I immediately locked the door and ran to the window to look out. As I watched this man run down the road, I felt nothing in my heart but forgiveness and compassion and began to pray that he would come to know Christ.

Many years have gone by since that evening. I had to guard my heart time and time again from fear that could so easily control me. One day I discovered that I was keeping a great distance between myself and anyone of the opposite sex. I noticed a visitor at church one Sunday morning and I could not even say "hello" because that visitor was a young man. Little by little I had stopped sharing the Gospel with those who needed to hear the Good News of Jesus. God, through His Word and through a series of events, began to show me that I had allowed fear to keep me from sharing with others the most important message in the world, the message of Jesus Christ and how He came to save us from our sin.

When I saw the source of my fear and what I had allowed it to do, my heart was broken. Was my sin the fault of my attacker or was it my fault? Who was wrong? I was wrong for I had sinned by not trusting God, who had delivered me and protected me, and continued to take care of me.

I had sinned by not sharing with others the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Someone had wronged me but that did not give me the right to be fearful and disobedient to the commands of Christ. The wrongness of the man who attacked me did not give me permission to sin.

One day as I was reading about the horrible death of Stephen, I was reminded that the important thing was not whether Stephen lived or died; the important point in that account was the condition of Stephen's heart as he was being murdered. Stephen did not wrong anyone; he was sinned against. Acts 7:58-60 shows his response.

...and they cast *him* out of the city and stoned *him*. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, "LORD Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "LORD, do not charge them with this sin."

Genuine repentance is near when you see your sin as being against God. David came to understand this as he said, "For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin *is* always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight" (Ps. 51:3-4). David saw his sin but it took some help outside himself to see what was happening. David's repentance was not imminent until he was confronted by Nathan the prophet. David had become dead to wrongness and possessed no sorrow over his sin. If godly sorrow had been present in David's life, Nathan would not have needed to help him see his sin. Thomas Watson helps us see how we can become deaf to sin. He said,

[Sin] "brings many a one to a seared conscience, to final induration. Isaiah 29:10: 'The LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of a deep sleep, and

hath closed your eyes.’ No sermon will stir them. They are like the blacksmith’s dog that can lie and sleep near the anvil when all the sparks fly about. Conscience is in a lethargy.”⁹

When you are lethargic about your sin, nothing happens. However, when you see your sin from God’s viewpoint, no longer can you commit the sin and ignore the problem.

What Is Godly Sorrow?

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers and encouraged them to live godly lives. He said to them, “Therefore having these promises beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” As in our day, the believers at Corinth needed to cleanse themselves. They had sin problems and he hoped to encourage them to live holy lives.

If people do not see the seriousness of sin, then there will be no godly sorrow over sin. Dr. Henry T. Blackaby¹⁰, noted author of *Experiencing God*, wrote,

If there is any area where God’s people are disoriented, it is in this matter of repentance. If we were to talk in very serious terms about repentance, many would bow their heads and pray, *Oh, God, if there is any lost person here, I pray that they will hear this word and repent.* But God is shouting at His people saying, *It is not the lost who need to repent—it is God’s people who need to repent!* We are the ones who have moved away from the LORD.¹¹

⁹ Watson, *The Mischief of Sin*, 8.

¹⁰ I had the privilege of working for Dr. Henry T. Blackaby for over nine years. Dr. Blackaby was the Director of Prayer and Spiritual Awakening for the North American Mission Board for the Southern Baptist Convention and author of the Bible study, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God* (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Christian Resources, 1990). During those years, much emphasis was made on the loss of the fear of God.

¹¹ Henry T. Blackaby, *Holiness: God’s Plan for Fullness of Life*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 2003), p. 16.

Perfecting holiness in the fear of God is an uncommon thought in the lives of believers today. Dr. Blackaby often taught people that we have lost the fear of God.¹² We fear men and women, but I am not sure we fear God anymore.

People's lives illustrate the desire to be accepted by men and women. Dr. Henry Brandt shared with me how couples can change outwardly in a moment's notice because they desire acceptance. He said, "When a couple or family is in an argument at home and the doorbell rings, it is amazing what can happen between the first and the second doorbell ring. They can put a smile on their faces, refrain from fighting, and straighten two rooms of furniture before they answer the door." The reason for the sudden change of attitude, facial expression, and behavior is that they are wanting to make a good impression. Yet, the LORD Jesus was inside the house the whole time they were fighting, but the fact that He was there did not seem to make any difference.

Fear of man seems to be certain with people, but we seem to have lost the fear of God. Ananias and Sapphira were killed for lying during the beginnings of the church in Acts 5. God knew that if He did not protect the integrity of the church by helping the people see the seriousness of sin during the early startup phase of the church, the church would not expand—it would evaporate.

We have lost this fear of God, and when you lose the fear of God, you have a little view of God. When you have a little view of God, you have a very small outlook on sin. Many believe their sin is so insignificant that they can handle the "little" sin. The way in

¹² For a thorough work on the fear of God, read the first chapter of Henry T. Blackaby's book, *Holiness: God's Plan for Fullness of Life*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 2003), pp. 1-18.

which we live reveals this attitude. We want to make a good impression to the person who comes to our front door and yet we do not even know who is there!

Most believers do not recognize the manifest presence of God in their lives. If they did and saw the reality that Christ lives within them and that He goes everywhere they go, and He hears what they hear, and He sees what they see, it would change their lives. It does not appear that the average believer who is in the middle of a crisis relates the possibility of personal sin to the situation. They do not seem to see the seriousness of sin. They need to see how critical sin is and they also need to see the good news that if sin is their problem, they are just a repentant prayer away from being back in fellowship with God. That is good news! Victory is just a repentant prayer away.

Have you ever prayed and asked God to forgive you of something, but you seemed the same after the prayer? Sure. The problem may be that it was a prayer but not a repentant prayer. Paul began 2 Corinthians 7 addressing the issue of holiness in our lives and that there ought to be a fear of God present in believers. He did not want them to be afraid of God in an unhealthy way but rather to have a deep respect and awe of the manifest presence of God living in their lives. They needed an evaluator of what they said, where they went, and what they did to guard them. Many want their problems solved but they do not necessarily desire a repentant attitude.

Many seek help but do not want to change—they want everybody else in their life to change. Statements such as, “If my husband would change,” or “If my children would change,” or “If my workplace would change, then I would be okay” will not alleviate the problem. To focus on others reveals there is no godly sorrow for your actions. Seldom do

people say, “I am wrong.” But, for a person to come to this conclusion, to see sin as the problem, they must come to a realization of godly sorrow.

Paul said, “For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while” (2 Cor. 7:8). The sorrow illustrated at the beginning of this chapter shows that a son was wrong in not cleaning his room. He had disobeyed his father and yet, it only made him sorry for a little while—he was not sorry about not cleaning his room—he was sorry that the situation made him uncomfortable. He did not enjoy the break in closeness with his dad, but he did not want to change. There was some sorrow of heart but only enough to make him contemplate the problem instead of getting rid of it completely by repenting.

Ecclesiastes 7:3 states, “Sorrow *is* better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better.” Genuine sorrow of the heart is not the same as genuine repentance. There is an enormous difference. Leviticus 26:16 gives the same type of view concerning sorrow, “...I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart.” God was gaining His wayward people’s attention. This sorrow of the heart did not turn them to God but it prepared the way for them to hear what else He would communicate to them. It is difficult for people, not God, to determine whether sorrow is godly or simply sadness. Nehemiah had a true godly sorrow but the king thought it was just sadness. Nehemiah wrote, “Therefore the king said to me, “Why *is* your face sad, since you *are* not sick? This *is* nothing but sorrow of heart” (Neh. 2:2).

Judas Iscariot also had a worldly type of sorrow or remorse. While Judas had followed Jesus and seen Him perform many miracles, Judas must not have had a changed

life. Judas' regret or worldly sorrow did not persuade him from betraying Jesus.

Ultimately, Judas committed suicide (Matt. 27:3-5). The sorrow of the world brings death.

Paul's writing to the Corinthians was to bring about a godly sorrow that would lead to repentance—a repentance that would lead to a spirit that would have no regrets—a spirit that would bring rejoicing.¹³ Godly sorrow brings a person to see his sin from God's perspective and can lead them to weep in sorrow over their sin. This happened to Peter in Matthew 26:74-75 as he wept after he had denied his LORD and he heard the rooster crow.

As illustrated in Mark 14:27 (HCSB), God revealed to Jesus through the Word that Peter would fall away. "All of you will run away, because it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered."

Peter did not believe that he would ever run away from Jesus. Obviously, he did not believe what had been written.

Responding to Jesus, Peter said, "Even if everyone runs away, I will certainly not!" (Mark 14:29, HCSB).

Jesus said, "I assure you, today, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times!" (Mark 14:30, HCSB).

Again Peter disputed what Jesus said. The Scriptures state, "Peter and the others kept saying insistently, 'If I have to die with You, I will never deny You!'" (Mark 14:31, HCSB). They were all saying the same thing.

¹³ Consult Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary Exposition of the Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1997), p. 253.

In Mark 14:50, 54, we see the response of the disciples to Jesus being arrested. Remember, Jesus was their friend and the one to whom they had just promised to lay down their life for. “Then they all deserted Him and ran away” (Mark 14:50, HCSB). At least “Peter followed Him at a distance” (Mark 14:51, HCSB).

Beginning with verse 66 we see the story progress. “While Peter was in the courtyard below, one of the high priest’s servants came. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, ‘You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus.’ But he denied it: ‘I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about!’ Then he went out to the entryway, and a rooster crowed. When the servant saw him again she began to tell those standing nearby, ‘This man is one of them!’ But again he denied it. After a little while those standing there said to Peter again, ‘You certainly are one of them, since you’re also a Galilean!’ Then he started to curse and to swear with an oath, ‘I don’t know this man you’re talking about!’ Immediately a rooster crowed a second time, and Peter remembered when Jesus had spoken the word to him, ‘Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.’ When he thought about it, he began to weep” (Mark 14:66-72, HCSB).

The sorrow Peter experienced over his sin was godly sorrow. “For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Cor. 10:7).

Peter’s sorrow did not come until He remembered the words Jesus had spoken a few hours earlier. When Peter remembered those words, his heart broke and he wept bitterly. This is the godly sorrow that leads to repentance. It is a deep overwhelming

sorrow over your sin that comes from God alone—and many times directly from the Word.

Godly sorrow led Peter to repent and become a great leader for the cause of the Gospel. Peter turned back in repentance to Jesus. His repentance was so deep that he preached at Pentecost without a dark cloud of investigation from the people about his character. The people knew he had experienced deep repentance and was a changed man.

Worldly sorrow conversely did not turn Judas to Jesus but rather to the religious leaders of the day. “Peter was restored and became the head of the apostles (John 21:15-19). Judas committed suicide and was doomed to destruction (Acts 1:18-19).¹⁴ Peter’s life was filled with abundance and meaning but Judas’ actions of worldly sorrow only brought depression and gloom. A sixteenth-century catechism asks, “What is the dying-away of the old self?” The answer is:

It is to be genuinely sorry for sin,
to hate it more and more,
and to run away from it.¹⁵

This is different than being sad. This is different than “I am sorry I got caught.” This is different than “I am not sorry for what I did, I am just sorry that what I did is giving me trouble.” Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:9 “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance.” Paul rejoiced that their sorrow led to repentance. “For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing.” Sorrow or being sorry is not repentance. It produces and leads toward repentance—but it is only one step in the process of repentance.

¹⁴ Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary Exposition of the Epistle to the Corinthians*, 255.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 256, quoted from the Heidelberg Catechism, question and answer 89.

Everything from God is eternal, so if God gives you His perspective on your sin, you will have a genuine godly sorrow over your sin. Discovery that you will never truly repent until you get sick of yourself and sick of your sin can save you from destruction like a lifesaver rescues a drowning victim from death. Anything short of a repulsive attitude toward sin leaves you accepting your sin and learning to live with it. For example, it is possible to avoid reading your Bible every day and think you remain in fellowship with God. Even angry, bitter, resentful, people can read their Bible. But God is searching for a repentant willing soul to forsake sin and return to Him.

I struggled with resentment and bitterness for several years. I look back now, twenty years later, and realize that I should not have been affected to the depth that I was, but it was so real to me at the time that I could not function normally. I could not eat or sleep. I became depressed. I could not seem to get out of a dark black cloud that surrounded me.

One morning, as I was reading my Bible, all of the sin that I knew was there for such a long time took on a different perspective. I saw my sin the way God saw my sin. I was deeply grieved by my sinful condition and I cried out to God and said, "I cannot go on any more. I need a breakthrough from You." That morning was as real to me as when I accepted Christ as my LORD and Savior. I wept and said, "Oh God, I see what You have been trying to show me. I now see for the first time." Was I guilty for all of that time? Yes. But, what I realized was that it does not take God years to help me repent, it may take me years to be willing to repent.

Finally, I was a changed man! My attitude had changed and I no longer was seeking justification for my sin by hearing my friends say, "Kerry, you have every right

to be angry.” That old attitude had been destroying my fellowship with the LORD and I knew that I must change. What I believe happened that morning was God looked into my heart and saw that I was broken over my sin and ready to repent. God grants godly sorrow to a person who wants to change. Repentance is a gift of God as described to Timothy by the Apostle Paul when he said, “...in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,” (2 Tim. 2:25). Godly sorrow is also a gift of God. When God sees you are at the end of your rope and you are unwilling to go on in your own strength and you surrender to Him—He responds. He gives you His godly sorrow that enables you to repent. God cleared my wrong thoughts and helped me see that my problem was not that I was angry, bitter, and resentful *toward* a person but rather I *was* an angry, bitter, resentful person.

Desiring Godly Sorrow

What do you do if you know that you have sinned but when you pray there seems to be no godly sorrow over the sin? Surround yourself with people who will pray for you. Begin praying to God that while you know this is wrong and you know that you should not be doing this you need a godly desire to turn from the sin. Asking God to grant the desire for you to turn from your sin will bring back the opportunity to repent so that you will be able to rejoice in abundant life. Any Christian can experience this abundant and joyful life. Background, social standing, wealth, or poverty has no affect on turning back to God.

John 16:20 says, “Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.” True repentance brings a joyful heart. When you see your sin from God’s

perspective, it is not appealing. Realization of personal sin brings an anguish of heart that again is illustrated so well when King David said, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight” (Ps. 51:4). When you actually repent, God changes your spirit and brings joy. That is the benefit of repentance. John 16:21-22 gives a beautiful picture of the result of repentance.

A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.

Great events in life take great toil and work.

Protection

Godly sorrow is for our protection. There is an added benefit in this step of the process of repentance. Not only will God convict you of sin, He will give you such a godly sorrow that your life will be discouraged from living in that sin again. For me personally, God gave such a godly sorrow for my angry, bitter, sinful spirit that I have no desire to live that way any more.

There is a difference between committing a sin and living in sin. There is a difference between quickly turning to God in repentance after committing a sin and being in bondage to sin. Godly sorrow deters you from living in sin. Protection from further destruction of a forgiven sin is the benefit of godly sorrow. One simply cannot imagine being satisfied with such a low standard of Christian living when Christ made possible a Spirit-filled, abundant life. Paul made this clear when he wrote, “But now having been set

free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life” (Rom. 6:22).

I am not sure that I can explain all of what Christ has done in me. I do know this, I have gotten angry many times in the last twenty years, but if you ask my wife she will testify that I do not live as an angry man anymore. I cannot go to bed angry, I cannot stay angry very long, because God has given me such a godly sorrow over that sin. When I contemplate living in the sin of anger and bitterness, God reminds me of how severely He disciplined me over that sin. It is as though God prevents me from living in that sin again by reminding me of the consequences of that kind of lifestyle.

Suppose two little preschoolers are playing with a toy. One takes the toy away from the other and they get mad. The parents come into the room and see what has happened. They separate the two preschoolers, take the toy away, and tell the kids to say they are sorry. But they are not sorry. They might be sorry the parents interfered. What the parents are unintentionally doing is teaching those preschoolers how to say something they do not mean. Preschoolers are taught very well by adults how to be deceptive. Preschoolers and children who are deceptive grow up to be adults who are comfortable with deception. In fact, as an adult, they are now living with a habit. Saying “I am sorry” can be something that you say because it is proper but not sincere. If we are genuinely going to repent, we must see our wrongness and we must have a genuine godly sorrow over our sin or we will never get through the rest of the process.

So how do we get to the place that we are genuinely sorry, when we really are not?

Dr. Brandt's illustration of a couple or family in an argument at home and the doorbell rings reveals how people can change their actions without changing their spirit. An arguing family usually is more concerned about what the person at the door would think of them than what God would think. They had no awareness that God was with them in their house before the doorbell rang. Neither was David aware of his moving away from fellowship with the LORD. His disorientation from God opened him to consider the sin of adultery. If he had been walking with the LORD, the way he did as a young boy, he would have never contemplated the sin of adultery. His weakness was his broken fellowship with the LORD. As long as you are not aware of God's presence, you are not going to have godly sorrow. To have godly sorrow you must ask God to help you recognize the presence of sin and desire the practical presence of God in your life through a relationship with Christ.

That is what happened in my life. I blamed all of my troubles on how someone had treated me. If this had not been done to me, I reasoned, I would not have acted the way I did. Later I discovered that the way in which you act depends on your spirit, not on what people are doing. The fruit of the Spirit has nothing to do with other people.

Gifts that come from God are eternal. If God shows us the wrongness of our sins, gives us true godly sorrow, and we are broken and repent, is there a way for a Christian to fall back and need the gift of repentance again? I think by observing people, I would have to say yes. Committing the sin again, however, is not the same as being in bondage to the sin. When I observe myself about this one issue when God so dealt with me, it seems as though He gave me such a genuine sorrow over that situation in my life, I just cannot live that way anymore. It is not me, it is Him living in me that gave me victory over that

sinful lifestyle. James 4:8 states, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” So if you prayed a prayer of repentance, but you are not changed, is the problem with God or you? It is with you.

If you struggle with this issue of godly sorrow, maybe there is something you are not seeing about yourself, or you are not ready to give up something that you do see. Worldly sorrow will hold you in a grieving mindset but godly sorrow will move you beyond grief to a refreshing work of repentance that will change your life!

Chapter Five

God Forgive Me

Step Three in the Process of Repentance: “God, Please Forgive My Sin.”

Okay, so the son still has not cleaned his room. It has now been 367 days since his last effort to clean his room. He makes a simple statement to his dad by saying, “I know I am wrong that I have not cleaned my room.” How does the son know this? By the word of his dad. His dad set a standard for cleaning his room and the son has not met the requirements.

Does a person know when he is sinful? Most of the time. How does he know? Galatians 5:19 states, “Now the works of the flesh are obvious...” When a person is sinful, he tends to avoid reading the Bible. When he knows specifically what sin he has committed, he may read the Bible but will avoid reading the chapters that deal with his sin. The Scriptures point out his sin only if he reads it. Not only will he avoid the Scriptures, he will also avoid seeking counsel from anyone who will point him to the truth. And if he is confronted with the truth, he will likely rationalize his situation to justify his actions.

The next day, the son speaks to his dad and says, “Dad, I am sorry that I have not cleaned my room.” He is sorry because his failure to do the right thing has affected his relationship with his dad. Though the son does not necessarily see the need to change, he does not like feeling guilty about the failure to clean his room. He says to his dad, “Dad, I

still have not cleaned my room yet; I know it is wrong, and I am sorry that I have not cleaned my room. But Dad, today, for whatever reason, I feel guilty. I do not like feeling guilty.”

Since the son does not like feelings of guilt, he then asks his dad to forgive him for not cleaning his room. The son believes to be forgiven is to be relieved of the guilt. As sincere and serious as he is capable of making a statement, he says, “I want you to forgive me.”

The dad thinks that the son is ready to change. The dad says, “Son, sure I forgive you.”

The son responds, “Great dad! It feels so good not to feel guilty. See you later—I am going to the beach!”

Desiring the guilt to be gone is not the same as making a life change. He did not have any intention of cleaning his room; he just wanted to feel better about not cleaning his room!

The Guilt of Sin

No one enjoys feeling guilty. Guilt is not a feeling that people are looking to acquire. Rather, they want to get rid of guilt. Even though a person may desire to avoid guilt, guilty feelings will still occur when a person has gone against something he knows to be right. This wrong action produces guilt within. The psalmist said, “Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You took away the guilt of my sin” (Ps. 32:5, HCSB).¹

¹ See Appendix 3 for more Scriptures related to forgiveness.

Many Christians stumble in this step of the process of repentance. Dealing with forgiveness has become so mundane that many prayers of forgiveness are no longer heartfelt. Public prayers in Bible study groups or church services often have a little phrase added to the end of the prayer such as, “and LORD, forgive us of all our sins.” What does that mean? If there was no conviction of sin, why do we say that? It is habit. If there is no godly sorrow over something that people have specifically done wrong, what good is accomplished by praying, “God, forgive me of my sins?”

Some relief from guilt is acquired when praying a prayer of forgiveness, but forgiveness from sin is not necessarily gained. Asking for forgiveness of sin is not the same as being convicted that sin has been committed and actually experiencing godly sorrow over the sin. Asking for forgiveness because godly sorrow is present and change is desired should be the motivation of a prayer of forgiveness.

If a child continues to ask a parent to forgive him of all his wrongs yet does not know what he did wrong, this will bring agitation in the family. If a child is asked by a parent, “What did you do wrong?” and the response from the child is, “I do not know, but just forgive me,” there is no change of heart, no sincerity. He has not expressed a specific reason for his feelings of guilt, so no sincerity is felt by the parents. The child is simply trying to gain entry into the good graces of his parents.

If a person keeps sincerely approaching the LORD in prayer saying, “Father, forgive me” with nothing specific in mind, it is not a repentant prayer. There must be a connection between conviction of sin and a response of godly sorrow in order for authentic prayers to be offered. In 2 Samuel 24:10, “David’s heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, ‘I have sinned greatly in what I

have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly.” David not only felt guilty, he also desired for the sin to be removed. Thomas Watson said, “Guilt makes affliction heavy. A little water is heavy in a lead vessel, and a little affliction is heavy in a guilty conscience.”² He further explained, “A sense of guilt may cause a man or a multitude to ask, ‘What shall we do?’ ...their sense of guilt must be supplemented by faith to produce repentance.”³

Attending church on Sunday, even if a person did not live a life obedient to Christ through the week, will make him feel better. Church attendance does not necessarily mean that he has changed, but he has some relief because he did something religious. Simple acts of good works are admirable signs that a person desires the right life but needs added motivation. Longing for the guilt of your sin to be removed is a good thing but not a completed act of repentance.

The word *forgive* in 1 John 1:9 means *to remove the guilt resulting from wrongdoing –to pardon, to forgive*.⁴ This word means to take away the guilt of sin, not the wrongdoing of sin.

For example, stealing a hundred dollars is wrong. A Christian would feel guilty about stealing. God removes the guilt of that wrongdoing as a result of a sincere repentant prayer. While the guilt is removed, the wrongdoing of stealing is still a reality. There may

² Watson, *The Mischief of Sin*, 7.

³ Ibid, 168.

⁴ See Louw & Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989), ἀφίημι; ἄφεσις, εως f; ἀπολύω: to remove the guilt resulting from wrongdoing – ‘to pardon, to **forgive**, forgiveness.’

ἀφίημι: ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν ‘forgive us the wrongs that we have done’ Mt. 6:12.

ἄφεσις: τὸ αἷμά μου ... τὸ περὶ πολλῶν ἐκχυννόμενον εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν ‘my blood ... which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’ Mt 26:28.

ἀπολύω: ἀπολύετε, καὶ ἀπολυθήσεσθε ‘forgive and you will be forgiven (by God)’ Lk. 6:37.

be some suffering to live with because of the wrongdoing. God is not removing the wrongdoing; He is taking away the guilt of the wrongdoing.

Tackling Guilt On Your Own

When our little granddaughter, Chloe, was four-years-old, she came to visit us in Atlanta, Georgia. My wife flew to West Palm Beach, Florida where she met Chloe and her mom, Christa, at the airport. Chloe was to get on a plane with Grandmommy and fly back to Atlanta. Unknown to Grandmommy, the final instructions from Christa to Chloe were these words, “Chloe, you be sure to help Grandmommy. Don’t you make her carry all of your stuff. You pull your own suitcase and carry your own things.” Chloe’s response was “Okay.”

Grandmommy and Chloe got through security with all of their things. Chloe was pulling her bag and Grandmommy was carrying some other items. The minute they rounded the corner and were out of sight of Chloe’s mom, Chloe handed her suitcase to Grandmommy and said, “Here Grandmommy, you can pull this.” They proceeded on their trip to Atlanta and we had a wonderful week together. When it was time to go home, they went to the airport and got on the plane. This time there were two suitcases to care for. They arrived in West Palm Beach, left the plane and were walking through the airport. Grandmommy was pulling both suitcases. Just as they came around the corner where Chloe’s mom would be able to see them, Chloe said, “Here Grandmommy, I will pull my suitcase.” What a smart little girl! She knew exactly what she was doing. She knew she was supposed to help. Her act fooled her mommy until Grandmommy told her the truth. Acting is something we learn at an early age.

Here is a test for your acting ability. Have you ever been in an argument at home and the doorbell rings? What happens? Do you quit arguing? Probably. Most likely you put a smile on your face and prepare to open the door. Maybe you have been at work in a foul mood and the phone rings. What do you do? You answer the phone with a sugary, syrupy voice and say, “How may I help you?” That is good acting. If you do not act right, you might lose your job.

As a believer, it is important to understand the difference between acting and being filled with the Spirit. You can act lovingly without being a loving person. There is a great difference between acting and being filled with His love, joy, and peace. No matter what is happening around us, the fruit of the Spirit is available. The fruit of the Spirit has nothing to do with other people.

Maybe you have said, “I will love them in the LORD, but I just do not like them.” That is an act. If we are not careful we get used to acting. If we act long enough we no longer recognize the conviction of the Holy Spirit. We just say, “Well I was in a foul mood today, but I will do better tomorrow”—but we do not repent. If you do not repent, sin remains. Sin affects you whether you admit it is sin or not.

Often a person will attend church and during the sermon, the Holy Spirit will convict him of his sin. Rather than repent and ask forgiveness he will say, “Well the pastor got me on that one; I am going to work on that this week.” Working on sin does not remove sin, repentance does. Reform will come after repentance but it will be based on a changed heart, not on human ability to act better. Many simply work on acting abilities. Acting wears you out. It is hard to hold up under all the pressures that come to us in life by trying to act like we are okay.

Have you ever blown your Christian testimony in the presence of an unbeliever? Possibly you made a statement that showed a wrong attitude or acted in a way you should not have. You said something that did not represent Christ in a favorable way and they knew you were a Christian and you knew they were not. When you arrived home you started thinking about it and realized how bad you had blown it in the presence of the unbeliever. Guilt began to penetrate your thinking. What would you do now? Could you ignore it? Should you make things right the next day? Should you wait until tomorrow to call the person and apologize for your words or actions? Could you sleep well tonight if you did not make it right?

These are the questions that come into the mind of a believer who knows he has misrepresented who he is in Christ. But what do you do now that you feel guilty? Do you take matters into your own hands? Do you think of how you could act tomorrow no matter how the people at work treat you? Do you repent from being sinful and ask for God's power to help you live His way instead of yours? These are valid questions that need answers.

People feel guilty because they are guilty, not because they are innocent. Have you ever heard someone pray, "Oh, LORD forgive me today because I have not been reading Your Word and I feel so guilty about it."? When you do something wrong you feel guilty because you are guilty.

If you are not careful, instead of repenting of your wrongdoing at work, you will pray something like this, "Now, LORD, thank you for forgiving me of my sin. Tomorrow when I go back to work, I do not care how those people treat me, I am not going to get mad and upset again." This is an attempt to act better instead of repenting completely of

the sin and asking God to change you. Acting is very popular among believers. Instead of repenting, many determine to follow self. Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).

Acting like a Christian is not the same as being a Christian. The Christian life is a human impossibility to live. Many think, “I am going to act better.” To attempt to act better without repenting is an attempt to solve the problem of guilt without turning to God. Even a non-believer can do this. Unbelievers can give up drinking, cease cursing, and learn to treat their family right even though Christ is not their Savior. They can become skilled at behavior modification but that is not the same as life transformation.

Has God ever convicted you about not spending time in His Word? How many times before you changed? The wrongdoing is real and observable. You want God to forgive you or to remove the guilt of your sin, but often that is all you want. “Just take this guilt away Lord—then, I will feel better,” is the feeling. While removing guilt is an aspect of forgiveness, it is not the complete process of repentance.

My dad was my pastor for the first twenty years of my life. In my later teenage years, God began to convict me of my sin and help me see myself from His perspective. One night while my dad was preaching, I was overwhelmed with my sin. It was not a sin of being on drugs, drinking, or riotous behavior. God convicted me about not spending time in His word, not praying, and not living a life for the LORD. At the end of the service my dad offered a time for people to come to the altar and pray. I went to the altar and knelt to pray. I wept over my sin.

I stayed at the altar praying even after the service had ended. This was an emotional and deeply spiritual experience for me. I prayed a sincere prayer to the Lord

saying, “Lord, I know I am wrong. I am sorry that I have sinned against you. Would you please forgive me? Thank you, Lord, for forgiving me.” That was the end of my prayer. I was determined that I would do better. I began having my quiet time, reading my Bible and praying, but this determination only lasted a few days. Within two weeks I had fallen back into my old habits. After having a major experience with God and being deeply convicted of sin, I was already off track. Has this ever happened to you?

My problem was I did not really want to change, I wanted to have the guilt of my sin removed. I did not like feeling bad about neglecting the reading of God’s Word. I knew Christians ought to read God’s Word and ought to pray. So, since I did not do those things I felt guilty.

About two weeks later, I was sitting in the worship service again while my dad was preaching. The same feelings of conviction began to overwhelm my heart and mind again about the same sinful issues. So, I prayed again. “God, I am wrong, I know it and this is not right. I want to be a great student of your Word; I want to be a person of prayer. Lord, please forgive me. Thank you for forgiving me. Amen.” Guess what happened in a few days? The same failure to be faithful. Now what was wrong? I wanted to feel better about my sin. I really did not want to start reading my Bible everyday; I wanted to feel better about not doing it.

It was not an intentional thing to pray and then determine to lose the battle. My prayer was very sincere, but I was sincerely wrong. Sincerely wrong is sometimes worse than outright rebellion because you do not know the depth of your wrongness.

God began teaching me that many of His people are coming to church every week asking Him to forgive them every week of the same thing. After the worship service is

ended they go home unchanged, but they feel a little better. After all, they went to Bible study, worship, and gave their offerings. These acts give some relief, but cannot cure a person from sin.

Acting is easier to do than repenting. Repenting requires acknowledging sin, having godly sorrow for the sin, asking God for forgiveness and cleansing, and being empowered by God to change. Acting is self-willed. Christians can determine to become more consistent in reading God's Word and praying more than ever before. Anyone can accomplish that, but can they accomplish a vibrant, personal, love relationship with God through Jesus that changes their life? Not while continuing in known sin. You can discipline yourself to read God's Word everyday and not be working on a relationship with Christ. If you have not discovered this yet, the Christian life is a human impossibility to live. The Christian life means to surrender ourselves to God and let Him do His work through us. If you are not careful, you will be resolute to act right instead of being filled with His Spirit.

Christians are good actors. You can greet someone at church with a cheery smile and a warm handshake, contemplating where you would bury their body if you could get away with it. It is totally possible to think that way. People can put on a mask and come to church when their spirit is not right and fool almost everyone.

This is not to say that you have a right to treat everybody the way you are truly feeling inside. If you did you would probably be in prison. If you are mad at someone, treat them right even if you have to act, but do not deceive yourself—know you have to deal with God about your inner sinful attitudes and feelings.

Acknowledge to God, “God, I am not real inside.” Admit your weakness and the fact that your ability to act better will not change your heart. It is God *through you* that gives victory over sin. Just because you are in a foul mood does not mean you should take it out on your family any way you want to. What you need to do is recognize that you are in a foul mood, treat your family right, and then get alone with God and let Him change your heart.

The Freedom of Forgiveness

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn. 1:5). Jesus said in John 3:20, “For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” Light exposes evil deeds. A thief prefers the cover of darkness. Why? They want to hide their evil deeds. If someone shines a light on them, it scares them to death. Why? Their deeds are exposed.

Since there is no darkness in God, getting close to Him without having darkness exposed is impossible. The obvious reason why we need to walk closely with God is because we do have sin that needs exposure. It is a positive experience to have sin exposed by God because God made a provision for sin. Jesus came to “...save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). If sin is not exposed then forgiveness is never understood as a need. If forgiveness of sin is not sought then sin will remain and continue to bring its destruction. Christians must stay in the light. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:6-7).

God convicts us of sin to redeem us. If we could ever grab hold of that, we would see the joy of repentance. Guilt is an awful thing; forgiveness is a blessing. Guilt condemns, but the confession of sin and receiving of forgiveness shown in 1 John 1:9 is not condemning—it is freeing. The guilt that the Holy Spirit evokes brings us to the place of repentance resulting in release of sin. There is no greater joy than knowing, understanding, and feeling the salvation of the Lord. God never convicts believers of sin in order to condemn them. God convicts us of sin to change us. He wants us to have a closer walk with Him. He wants us to get rid of this useless sin in our lives.

If you are like me, there have been times in your life (and maybe even right now as you are reading) that you begin to think of something that you did five or ten years ago that was an awful sin against God. Thinking about that sin brings terrible feelings.

If you repented of that sin and experienced a changed life, you know that God thoroughly forgave and cleansed you of all that unrighteousness. If you start feeling guilty as you think about it, realize that is not from God but rather from Satan. If you truly repented and were changed, God erased that sin and restored you to a right relationship with Him. God only convicts of sin in order to redeem you. Satan brings up past forgiven sin in order to condemn you. In allowing him to do this, your joy will quickly diminish and your testimony will suffer.

Dr. Henry Blackaby, author of *Experiencing God*, teaches that every time Satan reminds you of past forgiven sin and you start dwelling on it and begin to degrade yourself and feel guilty, you should simply stop and say, “Satan, let me tell you something. I am so glad you brought this to my attention because this gives me one more opportunity to praise God for what He cleansed me of years ago!” When you say that,

Satan will flee from you. He cannot bear to hear you give praise to God for how He redeemed you. God never brings up past sin that has been forgiven.

Be careful you do not miss the blessing of forgiveness by saying, “Now that I know what the problem is I will handle this myself. I can take care of this; I will be better; I am not going to do this anymore.”

Needing Change But Reluctant

I remember Dr. Brandt telling me about a man he was trying to help. The guy said, “Dr. Brandt, what do I have to do since I did this wrong?”

Brandt said, “Well, do you know you are wrong?”

“Yes,” he replied.

“Well, are you sorry, truly sorry, that you have committed this?”

“Yes, I think I am.”

Brandt then asked the man if he had asked God to take this out of his life and replace it with the right thing.

The man said, “Wait a minute, I did not say anything about changing.”

That man was brutally honest. Many people think that way, but will not say it. Chamberlain gives a great insight to the fact that knowing a change is needed does not mean it will happen.

A simple increase in evidence does not produce repentance. When the rich man in torment lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham with Lazarus in his bosom, he cried first for mercy to himself, asking that Lazarus should be sent to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his parched tongue.⁵

⁵ Chamberlain, *The Meaning of Repentance*, 162.

If I am driving down the road and the light comes on in my car announcing the need for an oil change, that does not mean I will get an oil change. I have the option of getting an oil change or ignoring the light and continuing to drive without that needed maintenance. Often people talk with me and share with me what they think is their problem. They say things like, “Kerry, I am really stressed and tensed and worried and I do not like this situation.” Then they proceed to tell me all about the problem. After I listen for a few minutes, I may say this to them, “You seem to be a very tense person.” Often they will tell me, “Well, no, not really.” They just told me they were stressed and anxious and worried and now they deny it when I repeat their words.

One man made an appointment to see me and brought a ledger tablet of about five or six pages of everything he hated about his wife and daughters. He started going down the list with me. He said, “I hate it when my wife does this; I get so mad when my daughters do this.” As he talked, I took notes. It was obvious the more he read from the list the madder he became.

When he finished his list I said, “You seem to be a very angry man.”

He said, “Well, I get angry every now and then, but I am not really an angry man.”

He just told me a few minutes earlier that he was!

I said, “You seem to be resentful about a lot of things.”

He said, “No, not really.”

I then replied, “You do not seem like you have much peace in your life.”

He answered, “Well, there are some trying moments, but overall I am doing pretty well.”

I said to him, “Well, I do not know why you came to see me. Do you know what? Your life is great; I do not know why I am sitting on this side of the desk. You need to be a counselor and help other people because you do not have any issues. Why did you come here?”

He finally started getting the picture. People are reluctant to see need for change.

When God convicts you of sin but you are not sure you want to give it up, then you need to pray, “God, I know I am wrong, but I do not want to change, but I know I need to. God, give me godly sorrow. Would You help me to want to get rid of this?” God will begin to help you see your sin from His perspective and begin moving you through the process.

But what many people do is pray while attending church, “God, I know I am wrong—I have not read my Bible. I am sorry. Please forgive me.” After that prayer they leave church and come back to church seven days later and nothing has changed. If you keep telling God you are wrong, sorry, and need forgiveness over and over in your prayer life but do not change, you become comfortable with a religious experience. Before long, just the experience of attending church satisfies you and you do not realize that the wonderful experience of walking in the Spirit is missing. No longer do you see a need to change; all you have to do is pray the prayer of forgiveness and think that settles it. People get used to praying the prayer but never changing. It seems as though people come to the service on Sunday, are convicted of sin during the service, ask for forgiveness, and walk out unmoved. This is the result of a hardened heart.

David said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties...” (Ps. 139:23). But, you can pray that and not want to see anything. Ask God

to give you the sincerity needed to repent. Desiring to be what God wants you to be will bring great joy. “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit” (Ps. 51:12).

Receiving forgiveness for sin is not the last step in the process of repentance. Many, however, are stalled at this point in the process of repentance because they take matters into their own hands. Never forget, God took matters of the problem of sin into His own Hands. God provided a way of escape from the guilt and torment of sin. Restoration is just a repentant prayer away.

Chapter Six

God, Cleanse Me

Step Four in the Process of Repentance: “God, Cleanse Me.”

The son approaches his dad the following day—now day 368—and says, “Dad, I have not cleaned my room yet. I know it is wrong. I am sorry that I have not cleaned my room. I feel the tension between us and I do not like this uncomfortable feeling. But I feel different today. Dad, not only do I feel guilty about failing to clean my room, I want to make things right with you and have a clean start. I not only want you to forgive me, I want you to take all my days of wrongdoing off my account. Please wipe the slate clean and let me start all over with you. I’ve seen my wrongness and I am indeed sorry for how I offended you. I want you to forgive me, but I want you to do more than forgive me. I want you to treat me as though I have never offended you before. I want you to cleanse me of all my past wrongs.”

The dad responds, “Son, I would be glad to forgive you and remove the record of wrong.”

The son says, “Great, Dad, thanks. I’m going to clean my room.”

Prior to this turning point, the son could run into his room and jump into the middle of a bed with dirty clothes everywhere and feel very comfortable with the mess. Trash on the floor, piles of school paperwork, basketballs, footballs, and baseball gloves out of place did not disturb him. The son never noticed there was a problem until day

368. Why? He was not aware that there was any other perspective of his room but his own. Being unaware of his problem allowed him the comfort of his miserable condition. Judges 17:6 states, “In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.” If people have no standard, they will choose what seems right to them. As long as the son considered his perspective as the only perspective, then he would be comfortable in his room. Today, however, he saw his room through his father’s eyes.

The Psalmist stated it this way, “...for in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to discover and hate his sin” (Psa. 36:2, HCSB). People tend to think they are good and see their actions from their own viewpoint. They cannot imagine they would do something inherently evil. Since they do many things right, they flatter themselves too much to see their wrongness. Proverbs states, “Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts” (Prov. 21:2). Ultimately only God can make an accurate diagnosis of the heart.

If the son uses his own standard for a clean room, then he can be comfortable with it. But, if the son uses his dad’s standard, there will have to be an adjustment to his thinking about the condition of his room. As believers, we have a standard as well. It is God’s Word. When a believer reads God’s Word and at the same time is living contrary to the truths contained therein, it will require adjustments. “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

Today the son is uncomfortable with the condition of his room. His eyes have been opened. Finally he sees what his dad has been seeing for 368 days! He sees the truth of the situation and is now responding to the truth. He understands that he needs to be cleansed of his wrongdoing, not just forgiven. The wrong feelings led him in the discovery process of seeing his true condition. To see your sin will not harm you. But to see your sin and live with the condition will bring destruction.

Thomas Watson questioned what benefits come from the affliction of sin. In his book, *The Mischief of Sin*, he gave ten answers that are invaluable for understanding the joy of repentance.

Question. When are we bettered by affliction?

Answer 1. When our eyes are more opened and we are not only chastened but taught, Psalm 94:12. Our spiritual eyesight is cleared: (1) When we see more of God's holiness. (2) When we have a clearer insight into ourselves.

Answer 2. When our hearts are softened.

Answer 3. When our wills are subdued.

Answer 4. When sin is purged out.

Answer 5. When our hearts are more unglued from the world.

Answer 6. When affliction has produced more appetite for the Word.

Answer 7. When our title to heaven is more confirmed.

Answer 8. When we grow more fruitful in grace.

Answer 9. When we really commiserate and put on compassion to those who are in a suffering condition.

Answer 10. When we have learned to bless God in our affliction.¹

¹ For further details see Thomas Watson, *The Mischief of Sin*, (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1998), pp. 44-48.

The Meaning of Cleansing

Cleansing is a powerful word picture. The Scriptures give many different insights that help give a complete understanding of the cleansing process. A general biblical view of the word “cleanse” means to purify and restore something back to its original condition.

Prior to a move to Atlanta, Georgia, Elaine and I rented a nice little house located in a good neighborhood. This house was perfect for us but there was something terribly wrong with the kitchen floor. It was a white linoleum floor. (At least at one time it used to be white.) Now, it had a rust colored stain throughout the kitchen area. No matter what we did to that floor, it remained white with streaks and splotches of orange. We finally gave up trying to return it to its original white color and covered a portion of it with a rug.

About two years later, we were ready to purchase our own home. Upon moving out, we discovered from the lady who owned the house what had happened to the floor. She had built that house as her dream home. When she was ready to move in, she noticed a fine rusty powdery substance all over the kitchen floor. This was red clay residue that had been left by the builders. Instead of sweeping or vacuuming it up, she used bleach water. She thought that bleach would clean the floor and once again return her floor to its original sparkling, white condition.

What she did not know was that bleach sets red clay into a porous surface. Once the clay is set into the surface, it can never be removed. The only way to get the floor looking like new is to tear the floor out and replace it with a new floor.

Cleansing is needed because our sin is set in. Sin is impossible to remove if the right method is not applied. In fact, no human tool available in this world will eliminate sin.

The dirt on our floor in Atlanta could be smeared around, we could make it thinner, we could make it kind of translucent where you could see a lighter tint of it, and we could talk about it enough to let everyone who entered our house know the reason why our floor had this stain, but we would still have the stain.

Sin is much the same way. No matter how much you talk about your sin, weaken its effects by learning to manage it, distort the picture of the sin so that it seems as though it is someone else's problem, or try to find a friend or counselor who will agree with you that this sin is caused by someone else, the sin will still remain and you will suffer from its effects.

When Christ deals with sin in the life of a person, He does not suppress sin, He does not ignore sin, He does not hinder sin, and He does not confine sin. He does not interrupt sin, He does not obstruct sin, He does not retard sin, and He does not control sin—He removes sin. That is the beautiful picture of why Christ came. Christ deals with sin thoroughly. He does not want believers to continue in sin and act as though it is not a problem; He wants to save us from our sin. If believers try to remove sin in their own strength, they will become experts at ACTING right without knowing the power of Christ to help us LIVE right and walk in His Spirit. You can try to find relief from sin or cleansing from sin, and maybe even achieve that goal, but Jesus did not die on a cross to provide relief from sin. He died to provide victory over sin. Dr. Henry Brandt expresses it this way, “Sin can be expressed, repressed, or cleansed.”

After the prophet Nathan was used by God to help David see his sin of adultery and murder, David prayed a prayer of repentance. David knew the guilt of his sin. Psalm 51:2 helps us understand the purifying aspect of cleansing as David said, “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” Wash me thoroughly seems pleasant enough. Yet this washing does not mean to have a nice warm comfortable shower with pleasant soap, warm water, and a soft cloth. Instead the word picture is much more rigorous than that.

Sin is stubborn and makes us stubborn. The Psalmist knew this so he used the word *wash*² to describe the process of removing sin. This illustration from Psalm 51:2, “wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin,” is more like the washing of a dirty garment. Modern conveniences were not available as they are today. The people of that day could not put a pile of dirty clothes in a washing machine, pour in a little soap, and turn on the water to a warm temperature setting. They had to work at getting the dirt out of clothing. When David said, “LORD wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,” the idea was to deal with the ingrained sin with painstaking effort. To wash a garment in that day, a person would go down to the bank of a body of water and find a flat stone. The flat stone would be placed just below the surface of the water. Then they would put their garment on the flat rock. After that they would take another stone and beat the dirt out of the garment. Sometimes when we are stubborn in our sin, God has to beat it out of us. Resistance to cleansing is much more painful than repentance. Repentance brings life and joy back to a relationship with the Lord. The difficulty of the

² From *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Iowa Falls, IA: Riverside Book and Bible House, (3526. כַּבַּץ **kabac**, *kaw-bas*’; a primitive root; to *trample*; hence, to *wash* (prop. by stamping with the feet), whether lit. (including the *fulling* process) or fig.

cleansing process is realized when the sinful action has become deeply ingrained in our character and God has to beat it out of us.

Yet, God not only wants to remove the guilt of our sin, He wants to remove it from our account and allow us to have a refreshed new beginning in our relationship with Him. Remember, “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us” (Ps. 103:12). That means you cannot find the sin anymore. God removes the guilt of your sin when He forgives you, and when He cleanses you He removes the sting of the memory and the activity of the sin. Hebrews 9:14 says, “...how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” He is setting you back in right relationship with Him. When God cleanses the human mind, soul, and spirit from sin, He does it completely!

Imagine approaching a marker board after being given the assignment to make a list of all your sin. You are handed a permanent marker to list the sins and you cringe because you know that to make a list on a white marker board with permanent ink would be a public disgrace. Everyone who came into the room for as long as the board was there would see the results of sin in your life. God through Christ, however, has provided a temporary dry erase marker for us instead of a permanent marker. As awful as a listing of sin looks on the board, we can be thankful that an eraser can remove the temporary stain of our list of sin. When a person repents, God does the erasing. Now, anyone who comes to the room and sees the marker board after God has dealt with our sin sees no evidence or clue of our sin. Why? Simply because it has been taken off our account—erased, removed, cleansed. Witnesses can now see a cleansed, erased, board. God takes away the

debt and accounting of your sin. Thanksgiving and joy fills the heart of a believer simply by remembering the fact that God erased the debt and now allows that believer to start all over as though nothing wrong had ever happened. This joyful cleansed life encourages us so that we ask the Lord to keep us from living a life of sin.

The blood of Jesus Christ allows us to start all over because it keeps on cleansing over and over. It never loses its power. It is not like a detergent that can only wash one load of clothes. Detergent loses its intensity in the washing process. The blood of Christ just keeps on cleansing. It is always available to repentant believers. Once God cleanses us from sin, there is a renewal of God's Spirit to keep us from further sin. 2 Peter 1:9 states, "For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins." But if you remember the great work of God to cleanse you from sin, then you are encouraged to live His way instead of your way. The Old Testament put it this way, "Atonement will be made for you on this day to cleanse you, and you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD" (Lev. 16:30).

Cleansing Restores a Relationship

When a child of God repents, the Scripture says, "For His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness" (2 Pet. 1:3, HCSB).

All the resources of God are available for you to take care of past problems. We have it backwards in our day. We are telling people to recover from their past by cleaning up all their relationships and messes so they can be cleansed. But cleansing from God is needed first. God provides all that is necessary for restoration. You cannot recover from

sin; you must repent of sin. When you repent, God will then fill you with such power of His Spirit that you will be able to deal with every issue that He brings to mind.

The son who is in a wrong relationship with his dad wants things to be like they were 368 days ago. Prior to his rebellion, when his room was clean, he was not having relationship problems with his dad. Everything was satisfactory. The son now desires to return to his original relationship with his dad and says, “Dad, I want you to not only forgive me, but I want you to treat me as though I have never done anything wrong.” Does God do that for us? Yes, He does, and we are extremely grateful. He cleanses us, He removes the sin from our heart, and He removes it from our indebtedness.

Sometimes, though God removes the debt, we still remember the stain of the wrongness.

I once had a shirt—a name brand shirt! This was during my college days when we had very little to live on and were just barely able to make ends meet. This shirt was a birthday gift from my wife. She saved back money from grocery shopping and little by little was able to get me this wonderful gift.

During those days, we had to do our laundry in a community laundry house at the apartment complex where we lived. She washed and dried the shirt only to find out that someone had left behind a wad of pink bubble gum in the dryer. What a mess! That shirt was all wadded up and stuck together by a large piece of sticky, gooey bubble gum which was stuck tight in the middle front of the shirt. My wife worked for hours and hours trying everything from ice to peanut butter to remove the gum and all of its residue. She even scraped it with a table knife while trying at the same time not to damage the fabric. If I remember correctly, that shirt even ended up in the freezer for a few hours. After

hours and hours of labor, the shirt was wearable but had a slightly worn place on the front. In time, it would probably not be noticeable. Most people would never notice the worn spot on the shirt, but my wife and I knew it was there.

Broken relationships can be restored, but there is always a slight memory of what once happened. Instead of allowing that memory to grieve you and steal your joy, let it become a platform from which you can praise God and thank Him for His restoring power!

Forgiveness and cleansing do not cause memory loss. Many are concerned that when they forgive someone they must also remove the memory. Losing your memory is not a requirement for repentance.

Often people say, “I will forgive them but I won’t forget it.” That is probably true. God is not going to destroy all your brain cells when you forgive someone. But He will give you a Spirit that chooses not to bring it up again—“love does not keep a record of wrongs” (1 Cor. 13:5, HCSB). Love holds no record of wrongs.

Think back to that marker board that listed your sin. God knows everything that has ever been written on that board even if it has now been erased. When God forgives sin and cleanses a person from sin, He remembers their sin but chooses not to bring it up again. Jeremiah 31:34 says, “...For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” Does that mean He cannot remember it at all? God does not forget anything. While God is all knowing, remember that when He forgives and cleanses you, He chooses not to bring it up against you again. When we forgive a person, we have to forgive and choose not to bring it up again.

If you have ever been truly wronged by another person, it is doubtful that you will ever totally forget it. In fact, just reading this sentence may have brought the incident to mind.

But remember, just as the son comes to his dad and says, “Dad, I want you to allow me to be restored back in relationship with you—like it used to be—as though I had never sinned against you,” you can also be restored to your Heavenly Father.

The dad says, “Son, I am so glad you want that; I forgive you and I will take this 368 days off your record. I have erased the offenses and we are going to start with a new slate. I will not hold those offenses against you ever again.”

The son responds, “Great dad, I am going to clean my room!”

Now the dad knows his son has had a change of heart. Repentance has truly taken place in the son’s life and it is known because his actions are following up on what his words have said. Reform has followed repentance.

Repentance is a great thing for us to learn. While it is simple, it is not necessarily easy. It is simple in knowing that Jesus came to “...save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). But repentance is not necessarily easy for us to do in the moment of sin. Thinking our way through what to do when in the middle of sin is difficult. Relating to this is easy when considering issues that are common to believers. Have you ever said, “Lord, forgive me for not spending time in Your Word?” Even though you asked for forgiveness, you kept struggling with being consistent in the daily study of God’s Word. Did you repent? Or did you just want to feel better, less guilty, about not reading your Bible knowing that you really made no plans to change? Change in lifestyle will be

present when true repentance happens. What you do after you pray shows whether you really repented or not.

The son goes to his room, forgiven, cleansed, and in right relationship with his dad. When he gets to his room he sees trash, dirty clothes, and the filth of 368 days of rebellion. While he is forgiven, and cleansed, he is never more aware than now of what his past character has left behind.

One Sunday morning I was walking down one of the hallways of our Christian education building to check on some of the Adult Bible Study classes. I was approached by a man who was very agitated. He was extremely upset and began yelling at me and accusing me and others on our church staff of sitting around and doing nothing all week long. Guess what had set him off? The coffee was not made and he could not locate the coffee pot or the coffee. This man was a deacon and a very prominent man in our church and community.

I let him finish blasting me with his angry words and then I asked him a question. “Would you say that the way in which you just spoke to me was evidence of the fruit of your flesh or the fruit of the Spirit?” Now, is that a good question? Yes, it was a good question. It was not asked with a haughty or angry spirit but with loving firmness. Understand, I had just come from a time of prayer in the prayer room and was so thankful that I was filled with the Spirit when this man approached me. As you might expect, my question brought a stronger response. He became even more angry and made a sign with his hand to communicate to me, “Get out of here!”

During the invitation that morning, I was standing at the front of the church to receive people who might come forward to pray. As I stood there, this man got up from

his seat and started walking toward me. (I wondered if he was going to hit me or something!) What he did next humbled me. This man walked up to me and put his head down on my chest and began to weep. He said, “No one has ever spoken to me in the way you just spoke to me. I want to ask you to forgive me for how I acted. If you want me to resign all of my positions at the church, I would understand and will do whatever you ask. I am so sorry.”

I said, “Oh, no sir, what you just did shows character—not lack of character. I would never want you to resign.”

We prayed together and God totally restored him and restored our relationship. This man repented and what he did next showed that he had repented. God had changed an angry, proud man into a loving and humble man. It was obvious that this man had been set free, cleansed, healed of his sin and now was able to go forward and do the right thing.

A New Beginning

My last name is Skinner. I will always be a Skinner. I have Skinner blood in my veins. I have a relationship with my dad—he is my dad. Nothing can change that. But, if we got into an argument and my dad said to me, “Kerry, I disown you as my son, you are no longer my son,” am I still a Skinner? Yes, nothing can change the fact that I am his son. I have a relationship with my dad. When you become a child of God, you are born again and nothing can change that. You have been adopted into God’s family. William Hendriksen, noted scholar and theologian, says the adoption talked about in Ephesians 1:5,

...bestows upon its recipients not only a new name, a new legal standing, and a new family-relationship, but also a new image, the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29). Earthly parents may love an adopted child ever so much. Nevertheless, they are, to a large extent, unable to impart their spirit to the child. They have no control over hereditary factors. When God adopts, he imparts his Spirit!³

An argument with my dad does not cease a relationship with him, but I can be out of fellowship with him. Believers have a relationship with God in the same way but may have broken fellowship with God. Repentance restores fellowship with God.

It would be a serious act against God for us to be willing to live with our sin after our heavenly Father has gone to the expense of making it possible for us to be adopted into His family. Hebrews 10:29 states very strongly, “Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?”

To be a believer, know you are sinful, and be willing to live with it is an awful act against God’s grace. Rejoicing in a faithful and just God who not only forgives us, but who also is willing to erase our debt and start all over, should be easy to do. Here is a thought that may unnerve believers when they think about it—Can God use a person even though he has sinned against Him? The answer is absolutely! Why? Because after repentance, a new beginning is possible.

Past Character

When you repent, God will show you the areas of your past actions that will require present attention. Do not try to decide on your own what you must deal with first.

³ William Hendriksen. *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 79.

If you truly repent, God will guide you to know what to do next. While negative residue of your past character may remain, you do not have to fear it. God will help you to face it in victory. Remember, if God has just cleansed you of sin, your thinking will be much clearer so that you will not only know what to do but be willing to obey.

People who choose not to repent may decide to not do so because they are afraid of what it will cost them if they do. Human reasoning can prevail and the thoughts about what would be required in order to make a change may be overwhelming. An attitude of unforgiveness will keep a person from being cleansed. Jesus said, “But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:15). Can you imagine praying, “Lord, forgive me in the same way I am forgiving others of their sin against me?” If you cannot, then you are not yet ready to repent. That is why repentance is rare. Most do not want to change but rather want other people to change instead.

When a crisis or a conflict in a relationship is present, the question is, “Am I willing to change or am I only wanting the other person to change?” Sympathy is helpful during a broken relationship, but sympathy will not set a person free if sin is the problem. True repentance does not wait on others to change. A repentant heart is not waiting on others to change, a repentant heart simply wants to be restored in fellowship with God.

Renewal with God desires for Him to forgive us and take away the sin that hinders our fellowship with Him. When we are broken-hearted, our own sin and separation from God is the focus, not the sin of the other person.

The son who did not clean his room for 368 days was unmoved until for some reason he became disturbed with the condition of his room. What was the disturbance?

He finally saw his room through his father's eyes. People will not truly repent until they see their sin from God's perspective. People do not truly repent until they get sick of themselves and sick of their sin. Seeing sin from God's perspective gives strength and courage to follow through with repentance. To be bothered by sin is not bad. Being bothered by sin is good news. Only God convicts of sin—but He does it to redeem, not condemn a person.

The son turns right back around after seeing the condition of his room and walks back to his dad and says, “Hey Dad, I really want to clean my room, but I just discovered that I do not have any experience cleaning rooms. Dad, I do not have the equipment I need to clean my room.” What he is saying is that he does not have the tools it takes to clean his room. But guess where he gets the resources to clean his room—from his dad! God will provide all the resources of the kingdom of heaven to a repentant heart. Everything needed to tackle the problems of past rebellion are available from a loving, powerful, and resourceful God. Just as the dad had all the resources the son needed for the past 368 days, God has just what you need. God's resources never run dry. The fruit of the Spirit is always available to a child of the Heavenly Father. The only reason the son did not experience the resources of his dad was that he simply did not ask for help. God is waiting for repentant hearts to ask Him for help. When He hears his children call for help, He gets involved in their lives. Not only does He forgive the guilt of sin and cleanse the debt of sin, He provides the resources for dealing with the “mess” our past character left behind.

God's resources are not strong today and weak tomorrow. His resources are as powerful and complete as the constant flow of an artesian well. As we walk with God,

our strength is realized by His Spirit. Galatians 5:16 proclaims, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Hendriksen says,

Moreover, the powerful influence that is being exercised upon and within them by the Spirit is not of a sporadic character, being, as it were, injected into the lives now and then in moments of great need or danger. On the contrary, it is steady, constant, as even the tense here in Gal. 5:18 implies: *they are being led* by the Spirit.⁴

Not only does God’s Spirit help us after we repent, God’s Spirit helps us to repent. Hendriksen makes this very clear when he says, “Even when they [believers] disobey the Spirit—and they certainly do...the Spirit does not leave them alone but works repentance within their hearts.”⁵

Remember there has to be genuineness in our heart to say to God, “I am wrong.” If a person is truly going to repent there also has to be a genuine godly sorrow. This process of repentance comes from God and is in itself a gift from God. When God sees that your heart is ready to change he grants the desire to repent. 2 Timothy 2:25-26 succinctly states, “...if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.” So, you have to have a godly sorrow and then ask God to forgive you of the guilt of your sin and He will.

Timing is more important than time. God is looking for the right moment when a person is receptive to the truth. Until a person shows some initiative to change, you are probably going to waste your time trying to convince him of what he ought to do at that

⁴ William Hendriksen. *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Galatians*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 216.

⁵ *Ibid*, 216.

moment. There is a vast difference between wanting to take a bath because you have leprosy and receiving healing from leprosy. A bath takes care of the dirt on the exterior of the body. To be cleansed means to be healed from the disease itself. God wants to not only forgive us, He wants to cleanse us, heal us, and restore us to a right relationship with Him.

Chapter Seven

God, Empower Me

Step Five in the Process of Repentance: “God, Empower Me”

The son approaches his dad the following day—now day 369—and says, “Dad, I just came from my room and I noticed for the first time how dirty my room is. Dad, I know you forgave me, and you cleansed me. You took it off my record; you are not holding it against me anymore; you are letting me start all over with you, and I am thankful. But I just came from my room and I saw 369 days worth of a mess. I am not sure why I have been able to live in that mess for all this time and not see how bad it was. But for whatever reason, now I see the dirty room for what it is. What do I do now?”

Remember, the son is forgiven and he is cleansed from all his wrongdoing. What is the problem with his room? Why is it not clean? Though his relationship with his dad is back to where it should be, what he saw in his room is the result of what his past character left behind. There are dirty clothes on the floor, trash spilling out of the garbage can, and everything is a mess. When God forgives you and takes the indebtedness of sin off your account, you must understand that you may still have to live with what your character left behind.

While there may be times when God takes the circumstances away, that does not happen most of the time. King David committed sin against God and God said to David, “Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have

despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife” (2 Sam.

12:10). What followed in David’s life was one great anguishing moment after another as you see in the table below.

Table 7-1: Sin’s Destruction

A Sword Will Not Depart From David’s House*	
David’s child would die.	2 Sam. 12:14–“However, because you treated the LORD with such contempt in this matter, the son born to you will die.”
David’s son Amnon rapes his sister Tamar.	2 Sam. 13:1, 14–“Some time passed. David’s son Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar, and David’s son Amnon was infatuated with her. But he refused to listen to her, and because he was stronger than she was, he raped her.”
David’s son Absalom has a deep hatred for his brother Amnon.	2 Sam. 13:22–“Absalom didn’t say anything to Amnon, either good or bad, because he hated Amnon since he disgraced his sister Tamar.”
David’s son Absalom has his brother Amnon murdered.	2 Sam. 13:28–“Now Absalom commanded his young men, ‘Watch Amnon until he is in a good mood from the wine. When I order you to strike Amnon, then kill him. Don’t be afraid. Am I not the one who has commanded you? Be strong and courageous!’”
David’s son Absalom turns against him.	2 Sam. 15:14–“David said to all the servants with him in Jerusalem, ‘Get up. We have to flee, or we will not escape from Absalom! Leave quickly, or he will overtake us, heap disaster on us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword.’”
David’s son Absalom intends to take David’s life.	2 Sam. 16:11–“Then David said to Abishai and all his servants, ‘Look, my own son, my own flesh and blood, intends to take my life—how much more now this Benjaminite! Leave him alone and let him curse [me]; the LORD has told him to.’”
David’s son Absalom is killed by David’s soldiers.	2 Sam. 18:14, 15–“Joab said, ‘I’m not going to waste time with you!’ He then took three spears in his hand and thrust them into Absalom’s heart while he was still alive in the oak tree, and 10 young men who were Joab’s armor-bearers surrounded Absalom, struck him, and killed him.”
*All Scriptures in this table are from (HCSB).	

Misery and anguish were the results of David's choice to sin against God. Not only did David suffer the consequences of his sin, but his family and those in his sphere of influence were affected also.

While our own sin brings misery, sometimes our misery comes from the sin of others. In fact, Jesus revealed that others would sin against us when He said, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matt. 6:14). If we need to forgive others their trespasses, it is because they have committed wrong against us. What we need to understand is that when we go through distressing times we have choices about how we will handle the problem. A crisis can be dealt with by walking in the flesh or walking in the Spirit. You can choose either way as a believer.

Many people choose to walk through the crisis in their flesh and consequently the situation just gets worse and worse. Trying to battle the problem in their own strength exhausts them to the depth of losing hope. Repentance is certainly not the goal if the main concern is what repentance will cost you. A repentant heart, however, is more concerned about what it will cost a person if a change is avoided. An attitude of repentance is not based on what is going to happen next but rather what should be done to return to God.

Married couples who are at odds with one another tend to want their spouse to change but do not want to change their own life. Fear of repenting is real because they fear that if they repent, their spouse might not. Statements such as, "I do not want to get right with God if they are not going to" permeate their thinking. It is not punishment to get right with God; it is relief. Not only is a change of heart necessary for repentance, but so is a change in our thinking.

If a person is waiting on someone else to repent before he will be ready to repent—understand that he is not really ready to repent. That person is still in the process toward repentance but has not yet achieved the goal. A repentant person is one who says, “Lord, whatever it costs I want to follow You. I will do whatever You say. If You tell me to do something, I will obey you.”

Waiting on a time when you make everything right out of your past experiences will not prepare you for repentance. Trying to make a list of everybody whom you have ever wronged or who has wronged you and then reconciling the relationship is not what is required for repentance. Repenting, rather, prepares you to make wrong relationships right. Repentance will empower you to do the right thing!

The key to Christian growth is the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. If you truly repent and commit to God to do anything He asks, He will put in your path, on your mind, and on your heart whomever you need to talk to. God will provide His perfect timing for cleaning up what your past character has left behind. Even if you have wronged one hundred people or one hundred people have wronged you, you will exhaust yourself trying to make all those situations right. If you attempt to correct past character issues while walking in the power of your own flesh, you will make things worse. Repentance renews your spiritual strength and allows you to think God’s way with His unlimited wisdom instead of with human finite, set, predetermined thinking.

When God empowers you with His Spirit, you will know you have truly repented because He will equip you to deal with the people and circumstances your past character has left behind. 2 Peter 1:3 says, “...as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and

virtue....”¹ How much is included in “all things”? There is nothing that you are facing in your life that God does not have the ability to help you go through. God has everything that pertains to life and everything that pertains to godliness.

Consider the son who sees his dirty room, knowing he is forgiven and is cleansed and is really wanting to do the right thing, but he does not know how. If you are not careful you will take matters into your own hands to try and clean up things your past character has left behind. This course of action usually makes a bigger mess—because you are not following God’s direction.

The son sees his messy room and he returns to his dad and says, “Dad, I do not have any experience at cleaning rooms; I do not know how to do this.” That is true. He has not been cleaning his room, so he has little experience in doing the right thing. Then he says, “Dad, I do not have any equipment I need to clean my room, I do not have the tools I need. Dad, I do not have a broom, I do not have any garbage bags, I do not have a vacuum cleaner, or any other resources. Can you help me?”

Now what can the dad say to that? He can say, “Son I have all those things you need. In fact, I have had in my possession for the entire 369 days everything you were needing. Son, I am going to empower you. I am going to give you the tools that you need to go deal with your past character. Here are the tools; now go and clean your room.”

The son has been empowered with all the resources necessary to deal with the problem of his past character. But what if the son says, “Well, Dad, what if I wear out that broom?” What would a dad do? Provide another broom. God’s divine power never runs out. His power can give you everything that pertains to life and godliness. The fruit

¹ See Appendix 5 for more Scriptures related to empowering.

of the Spirit has nothing to do with other people. The fruit of the Spirit is the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, living in us. All the resources of God are available to a repentant heart. These resources from God will never be diminished. God's Spirit empowers us as long as we stay in right fellowship with Him. There is no situation where the fruit of the Spirit will not work.

Not By Our Own Strength

Have you ever tried to love somebody you do not like? It is hard to do. You can try. You can do good things for people you do not like. By doing good things for people you do not like you may confuse your human ability to act with the empowerment of God's Spirit and think you are loving them. There is no place in Scripture where God says He will empower you to use your human abilities to love people. That is not what God does. He empowers us with His Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 states, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit...." When you were born again, the Holy Spirit came to live in you. Jesus said, "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name—will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you" (Jn. 14:26, HCSB). All the resources of God are available to a repentant heart. Paul states, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23). Not only does God empower us with these wonderful spiritual qualities, but there are also other things with which the Holy Spirit empowers us.

If God has placed His Spirit within you, then the simple but profound truth is that He empowers you with His Spirit of love which enables you to have genuine godly love

instead of determined human acting ability to love somebody you do not like. He does not empower us with our human ability to be the best that we can be. He empowers us with His Spirit to respond as He wants us to respond by His power. It is His love for people that enables you to love—not your love for people.

God's love does not bring up records of wrong. God's love always hopes and God's love always perseveres. Born again believers have within them this resident Spirit who empowers them to have God's love, God's peace, and God's joy. Even though these resources of God are always available, why is it that many have trouble experiencing joy? If God's Spirit lives within believers, and the fruit of God's Spirit is joy, why are many believers unhappy and lacking real joy?

Dr. Henry Brandt used to challenge believers to simply practice this one verse for one week, "Rejoice in the LORD always" (Phil. 4:4), and see if they could be successful at it. It is difficult if not impossible in our human ability. Do you know why a Christian would not be joyful? He is out of fellowship with the God of joy. The power of God's Spirit is always present—resident within believers—but sometimes we do not live it out. Lack of joy is not because God's Spirit is not available to us.

Being filled, controlled, and walking in the Spirit is not a familiar daily practice to many believers. Paul urged believers to be filled with the Spirit, not be drunk with wine. Based on asking many Christians which is worse—to be drunk with wine or to not be filled with the Spirit—most say, "To be drunk." If a pastor was drunk and found walking down the street, it would be in the newspapers the next day. But if a Christian was not filled with the Spirit, probably nothing would be said. It is just as much a sin for a Christian to not be filled with the Spirit as it is to be drunk with wine.

Do you remember times when you repented and you were refreshed by the Lord? Your thinking changed to God's way of thinking instead of your way. You wanted to live for Him and you wanted to follow Him with all your heart. Returning to fellowship with God opened your eyes to see that you had been trying to live the Christian life by your own strength. Our nature is to do what the prophet Isaiah stated, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way..." (Is. 53:6). But repentance returns our hearts to dependence on God.

The reason the son did not clean his room for 369 days was not because there were no brooms in the house, not because there was not a vacuum cleaner, trash bags, or other tools. His dad had all the resources available that he needed, but he did not choose to use them. He chose instead to live his life in disobedience.

John the Baptist came preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt. 3:2). When Jesus began His public ministry He began preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Repent for the kingdom of heaven is where? Right next to you—it is at hand! When you repent, all the empowering resources of God are right at hand. When you have a repentant heart God's resources will be evident. But if you are not living a repentant life or if you are rejecting the truth or rebelling in a certain area, even though all these resources are physically there, they are not necessarily experienced.

Once you are cleansed, you need God to empower you. For example, if a person prays, "Lord, forgive me for hating this person" and God forgives and cleanses him of the sin, then he needs to be empowered by God's love. So he should then pray, "Lord, thank you for cleansing me and taking this away. Now, God, I have been operating by this

hateful, unloving attitude and I am not sure I know how else to operate, but I want to operate Your way. Would you empower me with Your love?” This person who is sinful is just a repentant prayer away from being restored to fellowship with God and having access to His empowerment.

Empowering is an important part of repentance. Repentance is not complete until you start doing the right thing. Understand that repentance has to be a change of direction if it is real repentance. You can pray for days, “God, forgive me for being a jealous person,” but if you are not changed, did you repent? No. You have just been busy telling God how bad you are. By telling Him your wrongs, you are confessing. Confession gives you some relief. Just to tell somebody what you did wrong makes you feel better. It does not necessarily mean that you have repented. True repentance is evident when a person is reformed. When actions are reformed, change demonstrates the empowering work of God.

In the 1600’s, Walter Craddock, a Puritan minister in Wales whom few will ever know, gave a tremendous statement that helps us see the difference between walking in the Spirit’s strength versus human strength. He said,

O such a one doth great things, he prays, and hears, and reads, and disputes much; Aye but hath he the Spirit, or no? The greatest difference (that I know) in all the Book of God, between saints and sinners is, that the one hath the Spirit, and the other hath not.²

Strength through Weakness

My wife and I were visiting a church where we were leading a conference. We arrived at the airport and the pastor and his son came to greet us and take us back to their

² I. D. E. Thomas. *The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations*, (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 142.

city. We noticed that the son would not look us directly in the eye. He was probably in his mid-thirties, never been married, shy, and mentally challenged. He did not have the intellect that most people possess. Although he had several handicaps, he could speak very clearly when he chose to speak. I got to know him throughout the week as we were sharing there. He never really had much of a smile on his face and he never really stood out in a crowd, but he was always there to ask, "How can I help you?" Even when he made a statement, I had to strain to hear and understand what he was saying.

On Wednesday night, the conference was over at the church. My wife and I went over to the pastor's daughter's home for a fellowship before we were to leave town the next morning. We were having a good time together, and before the evening was over, the pastor said that they wanted to take a moment to pray for us as Elaine and I traveled across the country and shared this message with other churches. There were several people who prayed that night, but there was only one person whose prayer I remembered—the pastor's son. He began to pray, and as he began to pray, he began to weep. He could barely get out his words. Elaine and I began to weep and so did his dad, mom, and sister. Here is what he prayed, "God, thank you for sending Brother Kerry here this week because he presented the truth in such a simple way that even I could understand it." The prayer of this simple man broke my heart.

Following that prayer time, I asked him to pray for me every week as I traveled across the country and led conferences as I had done in his church. A few weeks later, I received an email from him. Soon he began to email me every two or three weeks asking about where I was traveling so that he could pray for me. While his spelling was not always correct and sometimes I had to labor over his words to understand what he was

writing, his emails were the sweetest, most encouraging words I received from any prayer partner. He would write things like, “Where are you going to be this week? Who are you going to be speaking to? I want to pray for you.” Externally, this man was a very weak vessel, but inside he was empowered by Christ living in him!

Jesus Christ is the king of every believer’s heart. He is the Savior of our salvation, and He is the one who will give us hope and strength to endure whatever we have to face. We are not without hope. The basis of our hope and empowerment is our Lord Jesus.

2 Corinthians 4:7 states, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” Here we see that Paul is showing us that we are like an earthen vessel. We are made of a material that is not of high value, but we are made in such a way to be very useful. Contained in this clay vessel, the followers of Christ have a treasure. Yes, we are God’s special treasure, but God also places within each believer a treasure—the power and magnitude of Christ lives within us! The power is not of us. It is Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:14, “Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.” God is the One “who always leads us in triumph.” Yet many times we miss out on the empowerment of God in our daily lives. Many go through an entire week and do not experience any victory in life. The problem is not that Christ does not live within them. The problem is not that there is no victory in Christ. The problem may be that as a weak vessel, they may have tried to live in their own strength and not in the strength of Christ.

Paul then says, “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing” (2 Cor. 2:15). In Paul’s day, when a

general had been victorious in a battle, he would have his triumphal march into the city. Usually the victorious general and his leading soldiers would be at the front of the march only preceded by the conquered people who were his trophies. Following the general the incense bearers would spread the smell of victory through the burning of enormous amounts of incense. As the procession went through the city, the sweet aroma spread throughout the entire city. The incense was so strong that you could travel down almost any side street or any corner of an alley or between buildings and smell the aroma. The aroma was what reminded the people of the general's victory in battle.

The captives of battle were the displaying trophies of victory. Among the captives were two groups of people—those who had surrendered and would follow the laws of Rome, and those who were forced to surrender. After the triumphant march, the first group would be released and the latter would be executed. As the general went through the city showing off his trophies, the ones to be released represented freedom but the latter group represented defeat. To those who had volunteered to surrender and follow Rome, the incense symbolized the aroma of victory. But to the ones who were captured under resistance, this aroma signified death. Paul put it this way, “To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life” (2 Cor. 2:16).

As people traveled through these cities of triumphal marches, an aromatic reminder of the general's victory was still present two weeks, three weeks, and sometimes even a month after the parade went through the town. The sweet-smelling incense had been so strong that as people went down an alley or between two buildings, the smell would capture their attention again. When they smelled that pocket of incense

that had held on to its resting place in the street, it reminded them of the victorious general. It is with this in mind that Paul said, “Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place” (2 Cor. 2:14).

This is the empowering work of God in our lives. He alone is the one who has won the victory. No longer do we have to live under the penalty of sin. Christ conquered the enemy. He is the smell of death to Satan. To those who have surrendered to Christ and His way of life, He is the smell of victory and life!

The basis of our hope is not that we have in and of ourselves a fragrance that people want to smell. What Christ has done is to place His Spirit in us so that when we function in life, people see Him working in us. We have this treasure, this hope, this foundation, this victory in Christ—living within us as earthen vessels.

Inexpensive but Useful

A million dollars worth of jewelry would not be put in a cardboard box and set out in the yard for safety. Fear that someone would steal it would be the concern. Why? Because the jewelry is too valuable to care for in such a way. The elements, the weather, dirt, or moisture might cause some kind of film to form on the jewels. If that happened, they might lose their brilliance. Anyone with jewelry worth a million dollars would put it in a safe place where it would be protected.

It is absolutely amazing that God gave his only Son and said to us that He would put Christ within these simple, weak, earthly vessels. God allows us to hold the presence and power of His Son so that whatever we face this week, whatever we have to endure,

the fragrance of the victory of Christ is always present within us. He is always there to show Himself strong.

Earthen vessels are easily destroyed. A clay pot can be destroyed with very little pressure. Once I had a plant in a large clay pot. We kept the pot on the patio. I thought it really looked nice there but thought it would look even better in the yard. I moved it and then the next day the wind came and blew the plant over and the pot cracked. Earthly vessels are very susceptible to harm.

People are also easily harmed. Tragedies of all sorts can bring people to their knees in a matter of minutes. When a crisis comes, it is usually a surprise. Seldom do we have time to plan on how we will face the crisis. God did not say that we would never face difficulties. But as we face the difficulties, how will we respond?

Paul's analogy of earthen vessels gives us the answer to how weak vessels can be made strong. An empty earthen vessel can be crushed simply with the pressure of your hands. But if you fill the vessel with something solid, it cannot be easily destroyed. If you fill the clay pot with concrete, you may crush the outer rim, but you cannot crush the pot. It is not what is on the outside that is taking the pressure; it is what is on the inside. Paul continues, "*We are* hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed..." (2 Cor. 4:8, 9). While we are as frail as an earthen vessel and in and of ourselves can be crushed, we have a deeper power.

After we repent, we need the empowerment of Christ living in us. For every born-again believer, Christ is present and powerful. The only reason you would not notice His presence or His empowerment would be if you had a problem in your fellowship with

Him. But if you are in fellowship with Him, you will notice His activity in your life. You will understand how, under the pressures of life, you will not be crushed. Paul does not say that you will not be pressed. He does not say that you will not go through despairing times. He does not say that you will not have difficulty. What he says is that you have a treasure within you that will keep you from being destroyed.

This clay vessel referred to by Paul is not of high value in monetary price—but it is extremely useful. Valuable oils and fragrances were kept in earthen vessels. Christ never said to His followers—present or future—that they had no value. Just as a clay vessel is not extremely expensive, neither is the cost of the makeup of the human body. It has been said that the human body is not worth more than five dollars when broken down to its chemical components. Expense, however, is not the issue. Usefulness is the issue.

If you are going to be used of God, repentance must be a regular process of cleansing. Believers have the moral fiber to be hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, to be persecuted, but not forsaken, so that you can be useable. You cannot be a dirty vessel and be useful. Christ is unwilling to take up residence and be active and powerful through a vessel that goes against everything that He stands for.

Before you can be a useful vessel, you have to make sure your heart is clean. You have to make sure that you are ready to be used of the Savior. The first four steps in the process of repentance is absolutely essential if empowerment by God is to be effective. Have you gone through difficulties and you prayed and prayed but nothing changed? The crisis that you are praying about is still present. No matter how much you pray, nothing seems to change. You begin to wonder, “What is the problem?”

If the vessel is not clean, God is not going to let you experience His power through His Son. God works through clean vessels. Jesus made this very clear when He said, “Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matt. 23:26). Maybe instead of praying for the crisis of the moment, you need to turn and pray to the Heavenly Father about the condition of the vessel.

In order for a vessel to be useful, not only must the vessel be clean, it must be empty. Your greatest failure as a believer will be when you are full of yourself. The greatest failures I ever had in life personally as a believer were when I thought that I could handle the situation. God knows your limitations of intelligence. He is not impressed at how talented and skilled you are and that you can handle every situation of life. If a vessel is going to be used to store treasure, it has to be clean and it must be emptied of self.

Jesus said, “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5). In order to be useful so that we bear much fruit, there is a time for pruning. Pruning takes away last year’s growth so that more fruit can be produced. When a vine is pruned, little is left of the branches, but all of the vine remains. If Christ is going to be effective in and through our lives as a vessel, it will have to be all of Him and very little of us. Just enough of us to say, “Oh God, how can I go through this without you?” will establish dependence on Him.

To be empowered by God’s Spirit, a believer must be clean, empty, and available for service. Many believers seem to desire forgiveness and cleansing from sin without any responsibility for serving Christ. Can you imagine Christ saying, “Let me find

someone who is already busy so I can give him more to do and take the pressure off those who are not doing anything?” That is not God’s purpose for repentance. Once we are cleansed and emptied of self, God desires for us to be filled with His Spirit for the purpose of change. This change may be for us personally, a change in His church, or a change to bring social relief for injustices against innocent people. Once a person is cleansed, simply being available is the response God is expecting. You will know if you have repented if you are willing to do whatever God asks next.

Adoniram Judson, the first missionary ever sent from America and assigned by God to Burma, came to the end of his life seeing how God had empowered him to be all that He intended him to be. Following is an account of his last discussion with his wife:

Then one day in January he lifted his head from the pillow and told her: “I have gained the victory at last. I love every one of Christ’s redeemed, as I believe he would have me love them.” There was a calm triumph in his voice as he discussed how it felt to have passion spent; hate, envy and ambition spent. He said at last: “And now I lie at peace with all the world, and what is better still, at peace with my own conscience. I know that I am a miserable sinner in the sight of God, with no hope but in the blessed Savior’s merits; but I cannot think of any particular fault, any peculiarly besetting sin, which it is now my duty to correct. Can you tell me of any?” Emily could not.³

2 Corinthians 4:16 states, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.” People who do not lose heart, no matter what is going on around them, are testimonies of repentant lives. It is obvious that Christ is working in and through them. You may understand their human weaknesses or even the frailty of their abilities or talents, but you can see the

³ Courtney, Anderson. *To the Golden Shore*, (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1987), 496.

empowerment of God in their lives to do things that cannot be explained except by His power.

What is most fulfilling for a believer is to see God do something through your life that you know you could not have accomplished. When you see God touch another life through your actions, through your teaching, through your love, through an encouraging word, through a phone call, or a personal letter—it brings far greater value than temporary things. Once a person repents of any known sin, and is cleansed and empowered by God, then the focus becomes on eternal substance.

A few years ago I was with my wife in Alexandria, Virginia to help lead a conference on the subject of revival and spiritual awakening. I was there with Dr. Henry Blackaby who was the keynote speaker. My assignment was to speak in only one of the keynote times on Saturday morning and also lead several small group seminars.

On Friday evening we were expecting the largest crowd—about 2,500 people—to attend. Many people had experienced tremendous change in life as a result of studying one of Dr. Blackaby's noted works, *Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God*. Consequently, people in the area were excited about hearing Dr. Blackaby.

On Friday morning Dr. Blackaby received a phone call. He was told of an urgent, critical meeting and it was determined that he needed to leave and attend the meeting. So Dr. Blackaby was to fly back to Atlanta. He said, "Kerry, I want you to speak tonight."

I said, "Dr. Blackaby, these people came to hear you; they did not come to hear me. They do not even know who I am. They are going to be so disappointed. Can you please stay?"

His reply was, "Kerry, I cannot stay. You need to speak tonight."

Ron Owens, Dr. Blackaby's other associate, was leading the music at the conference. I expressed to Ron how inadequate I felt to speak to such a large group of people who did not come to hear me speak. Ron reminded me that the people came to hear God speak. Then, Ron comforted me, prayed for me, and asked God to do something that could only be explained by His activity.

That night Ron shared with the people what had happened. He introduced me and then began the service. I felt so inadequate. I had wondered if people would leave when the announcement was made. I thought that this was possibly the most miserable and awkward position I had ever faced. First of all, I was thinking, "I am not competent to speak on Dr. Blackaby's behalf." Secondly, "These people are going to be disappointed he is not here, and the moment I get up to speak they are just going to turn it off."

When I stepped up on the platform to speak, I was amazed at the presence of Christ in me that empowered me to share. There were scores of people praying for me that night. I spoke on the five-step process of repentance.

At the conclusion of the message, people overflowed the front of the altar. There was no room left at the front and people were backed up down each of the aisles praying. God proved Himself strong that night. I knew it was not me. In fact if you were to ask the people who were attending, they would tell you that they knew it was not me!

About three or four weeks went by before my wife and I were back in Atlanta in our home church. An elderly woman came up to me and said, "Kerry, I have been praying for you."

I replied, "You have?"

She said, “Yes, several other ladies in the church and I have your schedule and we pray for you everywhere you go. I just wanted to tell you that we were really praying for you several weeks ago for some reason.”

I said, “ I know why!”

I tried to tell her my story but she continued on.

She said, “And I did not know why I had such a burden to pray for you, but I was praying for you while you were in Alexandria.”

I said, “That is the night I had to preach when I did not know I was going to have to preach. Dr. Blackaby had to leave the conference and I had to take his place. Thank you for praying for me.”

She said, “Kerry, let me tell you the rest of the story. I have a son who is in his fifties. He has been out of church since he was seventeen years old. I have been praying for him for over thirty years that he would come to know Christ. I received a call from him this past week—he lives in Alexandria, Virginia. He called me and he said, ‘Mom, I was at a conference in Alexandria a few weeks ago. I went because some friends of mine said that I must go and hear Henry Blackaby speak. But I got there and he was not there. This guy named Kerry Skinner spoke. I want you to know, Mom, I gave my life to Christ that night.’”

Two weeks later her son found out that he had terminal cancer. Understand, the power of Christ living in you will empower you to do whatever assignment God gives to you. God takes a weak but clean and empty vessel and uses it for His glory.

The empowered life is a joy-filled life!

Chapter 8

God's Unnoticed

While many do not have an accurate nor positive view of repentance, neither does there seem to be an accurate view of whom God works in and through to bring revival and reform. Revival leaders through the years began as unknown, unidentified, unnamed, unacknowledged, unattested, unavowed, unclaimed, uncredited, undesignated, and unsigned. Just who were these people before God invaded their lives and caused them to lead out in significant works for Him? Were they bankers, pastors, musicians, lawyers, farmers, or teachers? Were they popular, well-respected, educated, or publishable? Were they poor, uneducated, under challenged, looked down upon, or shunned? The answer is yes. God used all kinds of people to accomplish His purposes in bringing revival to families, villages, towns, cities, and even nations.

Variety is the picture we see in all of God's creation. Each person is uniquely different and each can be uniquely gifted and used by God. The power needed to affect others is not from the individual but from God Himself. James Burns, noted author on the subject of revival states:

Each of these great leaders has in common with all the others an unshakable faith in God, an overwhelming sense of a call to great service, a mysterious equipment of spiritual power which moves mountains, and a

determination to do the work he is called of God to do even at the expense of life itself.¹

Evidence that many in our day do not think that their life can make a difference is available simply by watching how people live. If a person is unpublished, unpopular, and has no speaking platform, they seem to think their life cannot make a difference. God is gracious in that He does not choose a person by their accomplishments in their community, world system, or family. God searches, "...to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him" (2 Chron. 16:9). When God chooses a person to use for His honor and glory, accomplishments do not prepare him; God's Spirit prepares him. While academics, the reading of books, and an attitude of being a constant learner are important, the qualifications for being used by God are not measured in that way. Character is what God measures in order to assign great responsibilities.

Only a spiritual experience with God would cause a person to volunteer and say, "Here *am* I! Send me" (Isa. 6:8). Our nature is not to ask God to put us in the limelight and send us to assignments we do not desire. Human nature is to perform tasks that come easily. But, when God invades a person's life and that person is saturated with God, then service is the response. When men, women, boys, and girls throughout history experienced God, their response was to say yes to whatever God desired for them. Their lives were changed by God and then used by Him in unique and magnificent ways.

Many resist, repress, or ignore their usefulness in revival because they compare themselves with the great names of revival such as Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney,

¹ James Burns, *Revivals, Their Laws and Leaders*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), 38.

George Whitefield, or Dwight L. Moody. However, if God's people could see the tremendous influence of some of God's unnoticed and unnoticeable people then they might be encouraged that God could use them also. To see how God uses the life of one individual who has been changed through repentance and then used for the kingdom's cause in true revival brings encouragement to the soul!

The same God of yesterday is alive and well today. He is ready and willing to use you in bringing change, revival, community and government renewal, and a ministry of reconciliation. Does your questioning or doubts keep you from being considered by God as an instrument of revival? If so, I hope that the stories of God's unnoticed and unnoticeable people in this chapter will inspire you to be willing and ready to be used in any way God might choose.

Under The Influence

The Apostle Paul stated to the Thessalonians,

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the LORD, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the LORD has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. (1 Thess. 1:5-8)

What kind of Christian do you like to be with? Think for a moment about the Christian who has most influenced your life. What character did he or she display that attracted you to his or her life? It was probably the fact that they lived a consistent life for the Lord. The fact that they never seemed to buckle under a load but stood strong through

trials and temptations impressed you. Or, it may have been that you were attracted to consistent joy or peace in his or her life. Whatever the influence, it was noticed by you even though they may never have known they were influencing you.

Your life may impact other people even when you are not aware that you are making an impression. God's influence through your life can simply be the recognized presence of the Holy God working through your life to degrees of which you are not even aware. Particularly during a time of true revival one person might be under the influence of the Holy Spirit in such a powerful way that his or her life influences thousands of other people.

Since our lives are always making an impression it is important that we stay up-to-date with God. Repenting every time God reveals sin in our lives allows us to be ready to be used of God as an influence of His to bring revival to other people. God desires to work through a person who has his or her heart completely focused on Him. Unless there is the holiness of God present and active in and through our lives, our influence will be minimal. Be careful that you do not underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit to work through one of His children's lives!

It is incredible how much a godly life, known or unknown, can influence others, a community, a church, a region, or maybe even a whole nation. Even though God used people in history whose names were well known or became well known, He could bring a revival not connected to anyone's name. A "no name revival" could come through people who are directly involved in the revival but are never really known to be connected with the revival. God could begin a great work in the hearts of common people that influences

others around them and yet have no single individual's name associated to that revival, resulting in God receiving all the glory.

People who have influenced your life may not even be aware they have had a part in influencing your life. Great truths can be learned from mentors even though the mentor does not know anyone is learning.

People are observing your life. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit your life can make a major difference for good to those around you. God did not save you and show you how to be cleansed from your sin in order for you to keep others from knowing how to live a godly life. He wants you to be a person of influence, not a person waiting for someone else to respond to God. Sometimes we do not seek revival because we hope someone else will carry the responsibility. Maybe someone else will be holy, yielded to God, and be the source of revival. Then if revival comes, maybe we can be a part of it without being noticed. Instead of desiring others to usher in revival, we must be willing to be used by God for His glory.

Living a holy life is critical because Jesus saved you from your sins and gave you the potential to live by the holiness of God instead of the ways of man. It is through this holiness of God that we influence those around us in the proper perspective. In our day sin has become such a common acceptable practice that many have learned to live with their sin. We learn to manage sin, we learn to put up with it, and we do not see the seriousness of dealing with the sin because we do not see how devastating sin is to our life and how it impacts the lives of those around us. Sin will cause a person to have a negative influence rather than a positive influence. Sinful actions force people away from God rather than draw them to Him. Many times unbelievers make statements similar to

this, “I know someone who claims to be a Christian,” or “I know someone who goes to ‘that church.’ If that is what a Christian is like, I want no part of it.” Though that is a poor excuse for not following Christ, it is also a very sad indictment upon the life of a believer.

God put within you His Spirit so you can be a person of influence. The Scripture describes how God equips us, “...as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness...by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature...” (2 Pet. 1:3-4). God gave us His divine power because He wanted to reach the whole world. How much is at stake for one of God’s children to stumble into sin and not represent the divine power of God? A whole generation could be slighted through the loss of the fear of God. If the fear of God is replaced with the fear of man, then believers will be attempting to influence under the power of their own strength instead of the power of the Holy Spirit. To be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we must recognize a true fear of God. To fear God is a healthy deterrent to sin. God takes sin seriously and may deal with sin in a strong and public way to teach watching people how serious it is for a believer to sin and think it will have no effect. But remember, repentance will bring a joy-filled life desiring direction and power from the Holy Spirit. This kind of life will influence others in a godly manner.

Lucius Bunyan Compton

The discovery of a rare book, *The Life of Lucius Bunyon Compton*, impacted my life tremendously. While searching for people who are little known in revival, I discovered a rare book on the life of one of God’s unnoticed and unnoticeable persons. Few have ever heard the name of Lucius Bunyon Compton. Research has revealed that

only one book has been written about his life and very few copies exist today. Most seminary libraries do not even have a copy of this book. Though Compton is relatively unnoticed in history, his life counted for much in the kingdom.

In reading the introduction to the book, I was astounded. Here is what was discovered:

I have been asked to write an introductory note to the “Life of Lucius B. Compton.” It is a pleasure to do it.

Brother Compton ever reminded me of the simple, unconventional call of Amos to the prophet’s office: “*I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet’s son: but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit*” (Amos 7:14).

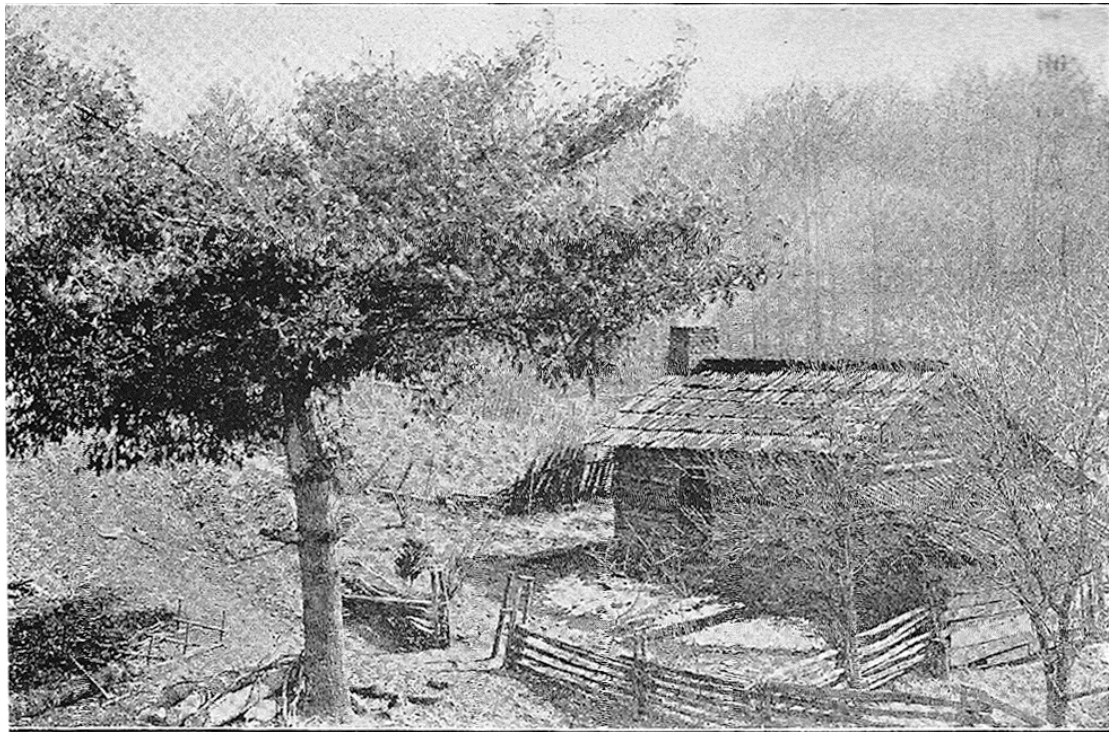
It is good to know Brother Compton in his work in the mountains, in his conduct in his own country and under conditions in other countries. In private and in public, he has always been the simple, unaffected “God’s man,” and, what is more satisfying, he still keeps his life fresh by facing himself with God day by day. God bless the new book! It will be a stimulus to many an unobtrusive worker for God and a good chastening for any who are inclined to think themselves something.

Oswald Chambers, Principal
Bible Training College
London, England
May 30, 1914²

Compton was an unusual man from North Carolina. He grew up very unnoticed. He was very uneducated, and could hardly read. His biographer, John C. Patty noted his poor background stating, “When Almighty God laid His hand upon this crippled boy, far back among the mountains of western North Carolina—tongue-tied, ignorant and

² John C. Patty, *Life of Lucius Bunyan Compton*, (Cincinnati, OH: The Revivalist Press, 1914), vii-viii.

poor....”³ According to Patty, “The Comptons were the poorest of the poor among the mountain people...the father—Miles Calvin Compton—was a mountaineer preacher of the Missionary Baptist Church, and received for his Gospel services, only a pittance.”⁴ Patty goes on to share, “When Lucius was a lad, he used to regard, as the apex of his life’s ambition, the privilege of living in a painted house and eating wheat biscuits three times a day.”⁵



Mr. Compton's Childhood Home

Photo Source: *Life of Lucius Bunyan Compton*, (Cincinnati, OH: The Revivalist Press, 1914)

At age twelve Lucius came to a point where he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Lucius became very miserable under the pressure of conviction of sin. The text used one night was from the first chapter of Proverbs: “Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man

³ Ibid, 17.

⁴ Ibid, 20-21.

⁵ Ibid, 21-22.

regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.”⁶

Out in the woods in the underbrush, he wrestled with his sins and then, one morning, when all had left the church except his mom and a few friends, the light of forgiveness appeared to him and a great peace came into his heart. Lucius became, at once, a very enthusiastic Christian. He eagerly witnessed to Christ’s saving grace upon every occasion...⁷



Compton When A Crippled Boy

Photo Source: *Life of Lucius Bunyan Compton*,
(Cincinnati, OH: The Revivalist Press, 1914)

Lucius was very sensitive to the power and working of the Holy Spirit. He understood sin and repentance. God’s great servants understand the joy that repentance brings to a broken relationship with God. Patty shares this sensitive spirit demonstrated in Lucius:

⁶ Ibid, 32.

⁷ Ibid, 35.

Some months after the conversion of Lucius, his father asked him to perform some task, which he failed to do. When his father reprimanded him for his disobedience, a resentful spirit sprang up within him, and so deeply did the discovery of such a temper grieve him that he hastened to a place of privacy and sought help from God.⁸

This tenderness of heart and desire to stay in fellowship with God permeated his life. Even though there were periods of time when Lucius strayed from God, he could not stay away. God used Lucius in many ways in various places to bring him to the point of being a minister of God.

As he developed into an adult he left home and went to Cincinnati trying to find work. Attempting to find his place in this world, he failed miserably, learned many lessons, and returned to his home as a believer whose life had been strengthened. But he was still very uneducated and unknown. People who knew him though began to notice a significant change in his life as he learned more and more how to walk with God. No longer was he doing the things that he used to do, he was a changed man.

His fellow-workmen noticed a change in him, and particularly, that he no longer used profane language, and Lucius frankly told them of his purpose to live a different life.⁹

The next major event in Compton's life was that he believed God called him to the gospel ministry. Patty wrote, "There is probably not an ecclesiastical body in America that would have accepted Lucius B. Compton into its ministerial ranks when God first gave him a clear call to preach the Gospel."¹⁰ One gentleman in Cincinnati was attempting to teach Compton a study of the Scriptures. The mentor's comment to

⁸ Ibid, 36.

⁹ Ibid, 45.

¹⁰ Ibid, 63.

Compton was, “Brother Compton, why are you so eager to understand the Bible? Have you the idea of becoming a preacher? I feel that I ought to say that, if you have such an idea, you should give it up, for these are days when churches demand educated ministers.”¹¹

Not long after this comment from his mentor, Compton had his first opportunity to share in a public forum as an assistant to a preacher. “Mr. Compton, at this time, made no attempts to preach textual or homiletic sermons, but in his inexperienced and humble way he endeavored to tell what Jesus Christ had done for him.”¹²

From this time forward, many people’s lives were changed as they heard Lucius Compton speak. His first solo engagement however had unusual circumstances.

Just awhile before Compton’s arrival there had been a difficulty between the members of the church, in which the pastor had been struck in the face. Compton was not long in discovering that one of the ring-leaders in wickedness was a woman who made herself prominent in the meetings. She invited Mr. Compton to be her guest at dinner one day, and, so generous was she, that she not only gave him a good dinner, but also the pedigree of nearly everybody in the church. It is superfluous to say that up in every family tree she described a buzzard. Mr. Compton, not having had the advantage of a Seminary training in suavity and prudence, said, “My sister, from what I have been able to discover, I don’t believe there is anybody in this community worse than yourself. You need to confess your own sins and get right with God.”¹³

Mr. Compton prayed and asked God to do a powerful work in that needy town.

“He asked God to break up that meeting in power, and also to give him, for the morning

¹¹ Ibid, 67.

¹² Ibid, 69.

¹³ Ibid, 70.

hour, a sermon that would make the hearers feel that God Himself was dealing with their souls.”¹⁴

During the blistering denunciation of the sins which Compton declared were damning the people wholesale, the husband of the woman he had reproved a few days before, arose and cried, “We are all condemned, there is no time to spare, let all of us cry to God for mercy!” The space about the chancel was quickly crowded with penitents and the revival spread for miles around.¹⁵

On another occasion, Compton was asked to preach in a community that greatly needed a movement of God.

The meeting was conducted in a schoolhouse and within a week the building would not accommodate the crowds. A great revival of religion swept the country. As the meeting continued for weeks scores were converted. A godless community was literally reformed. Homes that had been strangers to Christ became homes of prayer. A Sunday-school was organized, with men for teachers who had been regarded as the roughest characters in that country. Thus entire families became Christian, and a work of grace was started in that country that doubtless will bear rich fruitage in eternity.¹⁶

Though most never knew Lucius Bunyan Compton, he began a ministry in Asheville, North Carolina reaching unwed moms and orphaned children. God provided the finances through a poor preacher to do everything He instructed Compton to do. Time after time there were hardships at the Orphanage and Faith Cottage. Never was there a consistent income for the needs. God provided from one crisis to another. Lucius and other workers would pray and ask for God’s provision and God would provide. His faith

¹⁴ Ibid, 70.

¹⁵ Ibid, 71.

¹⁶ Ibid, 83.

was stretched and ultimately strengthened because most of the time God's provision came the final moment before disaster.



Eliada Orphanage (First Building)

Destroyed by Fire in November 1914

Photo Source: *Life of Lucius Bunyan Compton*, (Cincinnati, OH: The Revivalist Press, 1914)

In the early 1900's, Compton would go on the streets and find the prostitutes and bring them to a home to protect them, lead them to Christ, educate them, and prepare them to become upstanding citizens in the community. Those who left the Faith Cottage and Eliada Orphanage went back into their community sharing their faith with others. For almost 100 years, God has used the influence of one man, little known, to do a great work. The Eliada Orphanage has grown tremendously since those beginning days and is still operating today in Asheville, North Carolina.¹⁷ The modern campus is on two hundred acres and has ministered to thousands of children.

¹⁷ For more information on present operations, see, <http://www.eliada.org>.



Eliada Orphanage and Faith Cottage Car

Photo Source: *Life of Lucius Bunyan Compton*, (Cincinnati, OH: The Revivalist Press, 1914)



Cabin Where Orphanage Work Started

Photo Source: *Life of Lucius Bunyan Compton*, (Cincinnati, OH: The Revivalist Press, 1914)

An Unnoticed Farmer

There was a man and his wife, common cotton farmers, whose lives portray a perfect picture of some of God's choicest but unnoticed people. My dad was in Lovington, New Mexico preaching at the Love Street Baptist Church for a weeklong meeting. The pastor asked dad to stay in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fisher. Mr. Fisher was a deacon at First Baptist Church and was a cotton farmer. He loved his work of farming cotton. Mr. Fisher also loved God with all of his heart and he loved those who God had called into the ministry. He and his wife built a room connected to their home that had a separate entrance just so visiting preachers would have a comfortable place to reside. The pastor told my dad, "Bro. Skinner, all you need to do every morning is to have prayer with the Fishers before breakfast, share with them what God is doing in your life, and then take time to pray with them." So my dad did that.

After a few days of dad staying at the Fisher's home, Mr. Fisher expressed that he wanted to share a story with dad. Even though dad did not know Mr. Fisher well, nor did he know his background, he sensed that Mr. Fisher seemed to be one of God's choicest servants. Sitting in the living room, this eighty-year-old man expressed to dad, "Brother Skinner, I have not told this story to many people because many would not believe it. Brother Skinner, I want to share the story with you this morning because I think you will believe me." Dad's response was, "Mr. Fisher, I will believe whatever you tell me."

Mr. Fisher began to tell his story that as a young farmer and a deacon at the local church, he had been determined to serve the Lord with all his heart. His desire was to serve the LORD in his work as a farmer in the same way that he was a servant to the LORD through the church. One year he borrowed all the money the bank would agree to loan

him in order to plant the largest cotton crop he had ever planted. He knew that if this crop did not make, he would lose everything. He planted the fields and began to joyfully watch the crop grow.

One morning Mr. Fisher went out to his field and began to worship the LORD, thanking Him for producing this beautiful crop of cotton. The next morning, he went back out to the crop and walked out into the middle of it and noticed that there were little army worms all over every cotton boll. They were eating the cotton crop. He knew that he was about to lose everything he had. He began to pray. Searching for words to express his heart he said, "Lord, I will lose everything if I lose this crop."

Mr. Fisher went back to his house and called the only man that he knew who had a crop dusting airplane. He asked the man who could spray his cotton crop if he could come and spray his crop to get rid of all the worms. The man that owned the airplane said, "Mr. Fisher, I could, I would be glad to do it, but I have a very busy schedule right now and a lot of other people are waiting for me to spray their fields. The only time I could schedule crop dusting for you is this coming Sunday morning."

Mr. Fisher said to him, "Sir, if that is the only time that you can come, please do not come because that is the Lord's day and that is when we serve Him with all of our heart. All these years I have not dishonored my Lord by the way I work as a farmer. I do not work on Sunday and I am not going to have you come and spray my cotton on Sunday." The crop duster tried again to reason with Mr. Fisher about spraying his crop on Sunday but to no gain.

Mr. Fisher returned to a room in his house and opened up his Bible and read a precious promise from the book of Malachi that states, "Bring all the tithes into the

storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you *such* blessing that *there will not be room enough to receive it*'" (Mal. 3:10). Mr. Fisher then read Malachi 3:11, "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field, says the LORD of hosts." What a word from God!

Mr. Fisher continued telling the story as dad listened intently. Mr. Fisher decided to go back out to his cotton field but this time he took his Bible with him. He knelt down on the ground and he put his Bible in the dirt and he pointed at Malachi 3:10-11. He said, "God, I have always given at least a tenth of my income for tithe. God, don't be angry with me but did You really mean it when You said that You would not let my crops be devoured? All my life all I have known to do is serve You and now all I know to do is trust You." He picked up his Bible and went back to the house with his wife and they prayed.

Later, he felt compelled to go back out to the cotton field. As he approached the cotton field he did not know whether to expect a miracle or to expect a great disaster. Mr. Fisher told dad that morning, "Bro. Skinner, I have never seen so many thousands of little birds in all my life. These birds covered that cotton crop. Those birds were some of the smallest I have ever seen. There were thousands of these little birds eating those worms. I had never seen any birds like that before. I knew nobody would believe me so I ran back to the house and got my wife and brought her to the cotton field with me. We watched those birds. It was as though they did not even notice us standing there. Before long they flew away. We did not know where those birds came from or where they went but when

they left they took with them every worm from the field. That year was the greatest yield of cotton that we ever experienced.”

Mr. and Mrs. Fisher may go unnoticed on this earth, but when he cried out to his Lord, his Lord knew his heart and He listened and He responded. The story of the faithfulness of Mr. and Mrs. Fisher may not have been heard by many other people while the Fishers were still living, but this story revives my heart every time I remember God’s activity in their lives.

Unnoticed by man but heard by God!

It is not so much what others think about you that is important, it is whether you are accepted by God. If thousands of people in this world accept you, but God does not accept you, you are simply not acceptable.

Moms

Moms are truly people who are seldom recognized for everything they do. Many activities of moms are only known by the child and the parent. In a sense, moms are God’s unnoticed people—doing wonderful things out of the overflow of their heart—yet the majority of people never see their influence.

Jesus talked about this kind of person to whom we need to give honor—God’s unnoticed and unnoticeable people. One of these days we will be in heaven and will be amazed at the rewards from God to people whom we never knew by fame or fortune. We may be amazed that a pastor, missionary, a great Christian leader, or author could be in the back of the line when some of God’s unnoticed people, who lived in remote places, loved their Lord with all of their heart, and yet no one ever knew them, are in the front of the lineup of God’s finest servants. Many of these may be godly Christian moms.

I have had the great blessing of working with many godly people as well as being around many well-known Christian speakers. I have learned much from these people but nobody has taught me how to love God and His Word more than my mom. My mom is a very quiet lady. She is a very southern lady to the point that it takes her three or four syllables to say my name. She is slow and determined and I love her with all of my heart.

My mom was a pastor's wife for many years. Even though she was the pastor's wife, not many people took notice of her. She was a strong support for my dad and was always serving the LORD behind the scenes rather than up in front of people. My mom did not teach me how to love God's Word by telling me, "Kerry, you need to read your Bible every day." Though she did remind me of that periodically, she very seldom said anything about doing this. What was burned into my mind as a teenager was a picture of my Mom sitting in her bed every evening holding her Bible and reading God's Word. I will never forget that. Her greatest method of teaching for me was the observation of her life. Through this, I learned to love God and His Word.

There are probably some very unnoticeable people in your life who, if you mentioned their name, nobody else would know them. But they have had a great impact on your life. Their goal was not to be seen and recognized. They were not seeking attention so that you would stand up and say, "Look what this person did for me," but their very act of charitable giving and their living a life full of holiness communicated greatly to you.

Moms are a perfect example of this because of how much they give in raising children. Many times even the dad does not know the details of how much mom gives to loving and caring for the children. Moms perform all the tasks of raising, training, and

providing for children because of their deep love for the children, not because they want to be recognized.

The Collins' Impact

My wife, Elaine, was born and raised in Lafayette, Indiana. Her family did not attend church. Though she had a good home with good parents there was no teaching from the Scriptures in their home nor was there a prayer given at meal times. There was no understanding of the true meaning of Christmas and Easter. The children truly believed that Christmas was about Santa Claus and Easter was about the Easter Bunny.

When Elaine was three-years-old, her Dad built a house for the family just a few miles outside of the city limits. Shortly after moving into this house, someone knocked on their door and invited their family to church. The church they were invited to was a small group of people who had not yet completed their building. The people met for church services in a basement, which was the beginning of their church construction project. Elaine's parents did not accept the invitation to go to church, but they did allow their four children to go.

Every Sunday morning, Bill and Minnie Collins would drive to the Haley's home, honk their horn, and wait for all of them to get into their beautiful unmarred car. This continued not for just a few Sundays, but Sunday after Sunday for years and years. They would load the children into their nice car and take them to church. After arriving at church, Bill and Minnie would take all the children to their Sunday school classes. After Sunday school they would pick them up from their class and sit with them during worship. Then after church, they would deliver the Haley children home safely to their parents.

Elaine's older sister was the first in the family to become a Christian. At the age of sixteen, Elaine became aware of her sinfulness and her need for a personal relationship with God. With the help of a pastor's wife, she invited the LORD Jesus to come into her life and to be her Savior. This brought such joy and peace to Elaine's life. She went home that evening after the church service and with great excitement shared with her younger brother what had happened to her. Little did she know that God was working on his heart, too.

He awakened the next morning and was so excited as he shared with his sister about "doing the same thing" she had done. He, too, had confessed his sin and called on the LORD Jesus to save him. In less than a year, Elaine's older brother also came to know the Lord. These four children began to be burdened that their parents did not have a personal relationship with Jesus. In desperation, with great anguish of heart, they prayed for their parents. Years later, they had the joy of seeing both of their parents come to know Christ.

Elaine's younger brother now serves as a Pastor/Church Starter. Her older brother serves as an elder in the church where he and his family faithfully serve the Lord. Elaine's older sister spent many years ministering to the Indian children and their parents in the Grey Mountain area of Arizona and continues to love and serve the Lord today.

Elaine has had the great blessing of serving the Lord as a pastor's wife, serving in various areas of the church. She has served as the director of preschool and children's ministries, directed and taught in numerous Vacation Bible Schools, as well as children's summer camps. She has led training conferences for Sunday school teachers on both

regional and state levels. Presently, she guides a Sunday school department for second grade children.

God has placed within her heart a deep desire to reach out to children and give them an opportunity to learn about Jesus. Early one morning as she was walking through our neighborhood and praying for the families that lived there, God put a song on her heart. Elaine wrote this song in the form of a poem, illustrating the true desire that God has placed in her heart and the love God has for children.

Gather the Children

Children are truly a gift from the Lord,
A blessing, a heritage, we're told in His Word.
Their value far exceeds the price of riches untold,
Of rubies, of emeralds, of silver, and gold.

Oh gather this treasure and bring them to Christ.
Tell them all about Jesus, His love, and His life.
Gather the Children and teach them God's Word,
Then one day, they'll trust Him as Savior and Lord.

Precious are the children, His jewels, His gems,
By color or size, do we separate them?
Some are shiny, some are dull, not polished up bright,
Some are chipped, and some are scratched, and scarred up for life.

Oh gather this treasure and bring them to Christ.
Tell them all about Jesus, His love, and His life.
Gather the Children and teach them God's Word,
Then one day, they'll trust Him as Savior and Lord.

As I think of all that God has done in and through Elaine's family, I cannot help but think of Bill and Minnie Collins who remained faithful to their Lord and answered His call to gather up four children for Sunday school, church, and Vacation Bible School, and to tenderly care for their many needs during those times away from their parents.

Many will never know of the Collins and their names will probably never be in print for the entire world to see, but there is no doubt that they were known and noticed by God.

The Collins were not doing their good deeds in order for the world to take notice. They were simply going about their life as a faithful servant of God without calling attention to themselves. Jesus spoke in Matthew 6:1-2 saying, “Take heed,” that is pay attention, notice this, watch out for this, “that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men.” Jesus was not teaching the people that they should not do charitable deeds, but rather He was talking about the *way* in which people should do charitable deeds. For the Jews there were eight levels of giving alms to the poor. The greatest level or attitude in which to give would be to give the gift in such a way that nobody ever knew that you gave it, and secondly, the people receiving the gift would be given the gift in such a way that they did not know who it came from. This was the highest level of charitable deeds. But Jesus gave a warning, “But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matt. 6:3-4).

He did not say to avoid giving unless everything is in secret. There will be times when you do charitable deeds that others will publicly see what has happened and may even say something about it. That is acceptable, if your heart was right seeking no recognition for what you did. But Christ knew that our human nature would fight against our spiritual nature. Human nature has a difficult time doing something great and not

being recognized for it. The very nature of our human flesh wants to stand out, be in the limelight, and receive acknowledgment for what we do. Jesus instructed us to be careful so that we do our charitable deeds, but do not do them in such a manner so as to be seen by men. While the human flesh desires recognition for charitable deeds, the Spirit of Christ living in us does not necessitate recognition. To receive credit is something of your own flesh and mind. To be unnoticed by people is not a tragedy. To be unnoticed by God is a catastrophe.

To lower your Christian standard of living to where your feelings are hurt if you are not recognized for your actions results in being unnoticed by God. Jesus said, “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven” (Matt. 6:1). But He said, “and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly” (Matt. 6:4). God rewarded Mr. Fisher openly by giving him a great cotton crop. It would be a shame, though, to receive the praises of man and lose out on the reward of God.

Luxury to Repent

Edward D. Griffin, a relatively unknown preacher during the second great awakening stated,

The happiness I seek is derived from the happiness and glory of God. I feel that my sins against his authority and happiness and glory, are unspeakably vile, and do deserve more misery than I can measure, and my judgment tells me, eternal misery. I love to repent. It is a luxury to lie low at His feet and mourn for sin. Christ is precious to my soul, the chief among ten thousands and altogether lovely. That God should have regenerated me, according to an eternal decree of election, making all the

difference in my favor between an eternal hell and an eternal heaven, lays me under boundless, boundless, boundless obligations.¹⁸

This attitude truly lays the foundation for a repentance that brings great joy.

Griffin's emphasis was not to be known by all those around him during the great revival but rather to be known by God. Not many could join Griffin in saying, "I love to repent!" But when one understands the love of God and how He gives eternal life, then to be unnoticed by men and known by God is an honor!

Stephen Grellat

A most amazing testimony is found in a book titled, *Measure Your Life* by Wesley Duewel. Duewel tells the story of a man named Stephen Grellat who walked very closely with God and obeyed the Lord even when he did not understand all of the details or circumstances surrounding God's direction. One day God's Spirit urged Grellat to go preach in a heavily forested area of America. When he arrived at the location where God had instructed him to go, all the little shanties were empty for all of the loggers had left. Can you imagine what must have been going through this man's mind? What would you have done? Duewel shares that, "He was so sure that he was sent by God that he went into an empty shanty and preached to the bare walls the sermon that God had placed upon his heart. He then returned to his home. He could never understand why God would send him to preach to an empty shanty."¹⁹

¹⁸ Edward D. Griffin, *The Life and Sermons of Edward D. Griffin*, (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 224.

¹⁹ Wesley Duewel. *Measure Your Life*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 21.

Years later, in England, as Mr. Grellat was walking across London Bridge, God gave him a glimpse of how He had used him so many years ago. A man grasped Mr. Grellat's arm and said,

"I found you at last!"

"I think you are mistaken," said Mr. Grellat.

"No. Didn't you preach in an empty shanty in the woods of America years ago?"

"Yes," Mr. Grellat admitted, "but no one was there."

"I was the foreman in charge of the loggers," the stranger explained. "We had moved to a new location before I realized I'd left one of my tools behind. I returned to get it and heard a voice in one of the shanties; I peered through a crack between the logs and saw you. You never saw me, but I listened to the rest of your sermon. God touched my heart, and I became so convicted of my sin that after some time I purchased a Bible, repented of my sins, and became a Christian. Then I began to win my men to Christ. Your sermon has led at least a thousand people to Christ and three of them have already become missionaries!"²⁰

I would have to put this man of God, Stephen Grellat, under the category of God's unnoticed. Had the man crossing London Bridge that day not identified Mr. Grellat, we would never have had a glimpse on this earth of what God did through his life. He would have remained totally unnoticed by man but certainly greatly noticed by God.

Other Unnoticed

Georgy Slesarey, a Russian violinist, experienced God working through his life in a way he did not expect. He shares,

I remember the moment I began to think seriously about the call God had placed on my life. I began to prepare myself spiritually before I would

²⁰ Ibid, 21-22.

perform, just as though it was a sermon I was going to preach. I saw that God wanted to use my violin playing itself as a *witness*. I soon discovered that people were turning to God while I was playing. Some were being converted even as I played my violin.²¹

In the same way, God used James Glendinning, a most unlikely preacher in the 1859–“Fifty Nine”–revival of Ulster.²²

In the inscrutable ways of the Almighty, the one chosen as the original channel of the great revival of those early days was the least worthy and competent of all the preachers of Ulster, James Glendinning of Oldstone. Our eye-witness before quoted bears the following testimony: “Mr. Glendinning, a man who never would have been chosen by a wise assembly of ministers, nor sent to begin a reformation in this land, for he was little better than distracted-yea, afterward did actually distract-yet this was the Lord’s choice to begin the admirable work of God, which I mention on purpose, that all men may see how the glory is only the Lord’s in making a holy nation in this profane land, and that it was not by might nor by power, nor by man’s wisdom, but by my Spirit, says the Lord.”²³

This great revival of 1859 was also greatly stirred by an unnoticed woman named Mrs. Colville. Her story reminds every servant of God the power of His inner working.

Without doubt, the first springing up of that mighty river of God, which so soon engulfed the whole of Ulster in its flood of revival blessing, was in the parish of Connor, Co. Antrim. The parish of Connor includes the village of Kells and is situated about 3 miles from Ballymena. The district is usually called by the joint name, Kells and Connor. Claims that the revival had its origin elsewhere cannot be substantiated.

In November 1856 a Mrs. Colville, an English lady, visited Ballymena. This lady had a remarkable testimony. She had been religious but unregenerate, then one day the grace of God visited her, bringing salvation to her heart. She immediately testified of the great things God had done for her soul. Her relations were very angry and said she had “gone mad.”

²¹ Ron Owens, *They Could Not Stop the Music: The Life and Witness of Georgy Slesarey*, (Kingsport, Tennessee: Fresh Springs Publications, 2000), 32.

²² For more information see: *The Fifty Nine Revival* (Belfast: J. C. Print Ltd., 1981).

²³ Ian R. K. Paisley, *The Fifty Nine Revival* (Belfast: J. C. Print Ltd., 1981), 4.

So embittered did they become that she had to leave her home and become a “wanderer.”

This persecution, however, did not quench her zeal for Christ. Like the apostles of old she could not but speak the things which she had seen and heard. She became a missionary of the Baptist Missionary Society in England. Her work brought her to Ulster and to County Antrim where she went from door to door telling forth the message which had brought such peace to her heart.

One day she visited a home in the town of Ballymena where a young woman lay dying. Mrs. Colville spoke to the dying woman and those of her girl companions who were gathered round her, concerning the things that pertain unto eternal peace. She described the nature of true conversion to God and pointed out that they were strangers to it and still “in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.”

Her words were overheard by a young man named James McQuilkin, and the barbed arrows from this bow drawn at a venture fastened with a mighty pricking upon his conscience. He rose and hastily made his way homewards in deep anxiety of soul. This anxiety increased and became so unbearable that he was forced to seek out Mrs. Colville and have further conversation with her. Mr. Jeremiah Meneely, a neighbour and close associate of Mr. McQuilkin, takes up the story: “Mr. James McQuilkin was a strong Calvinist and he feared that Mrs. Colville was not teaching straight Calvinistic doctrine. He asked her whether she was a Calvinist or not. “I would not wish,” she replied, “to be more or less a Calvinist than our Lord and His apostles. But,” she continued, “I do not care to talk on mere points of doctrine. I would rather speak of the experience of salvation in the soul. If one were to tell me what he knows of the state of his heart towards God, I think I could tell him whether he knows the Lord Jesus savingly.”

James felt that his heart was not right toward God, but he was too proud of his head-knowledge to admit the fact and he at once dropped the conversation. A woman who was present then began to unbosom herself to Mrs. Colville. Her spiritual condition was so much like that of James McQuilkin that he felt as though he could not have described his own condition more perfectly. He waited with almost breathless expectation to see what Mrs. Colville would say to the woman regarding her spiritual condition. After a brief pause, she said, ‘My dear, you have never known the Lord Jesus.’ James felt that this was true concerning himself, and the reply sent conviction like a dagger to his heart. After weeks of struggling

under great agony of soul, he at last found peace and rest through trusting Jesus.²⁴

Your Life

Is your life being used as an instrument of God for revival? The written account of the people in this chapter is provided as inspiration to you. No matter whether you are well known or little known, God can use you to spread His reviving Spirit! The factor that is common with each of these people is that they had a humble spirit that recognized their weaknesses and gave them the willingness to repent when sin was present. This willingness to repent brought great joy and usefulness to their lives.

God can use anyone who is willing to be humble before Him. The Scripture reveals, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the LORD, and He will lift you up” (James 4:10). Whether you are well known or not by people is not the issue—rather it is whether you are well known to God. “For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the LORD commends” (2 Cor. 10:18).

Jesus said that we are to be a light in the world. The amplified Bible makes clear in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men that they may see your moral excellence and your praiseworthy, noble, and good deeds and recognize and honor and praise and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” This light that shines is most often an unconscious influence that affects others by the way we live, act, show our manners, tone of voice, and facial expressions. This influence flows directly from our character and conduct. “You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men” (2 Cor. 3:2). Expect people to be affected by what they see in your life as a disciple.

²⁴ Ibid, 14-15.

Though some people become well known because they lead armies, develop corporations, make millions of dollars, enact laws, serve in public office, invent new technology, reason out a theory, develop weapons, or explore space, these things flow from a conscious effort to produce change. But what we do without an intention flows naturally from our heart. “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). Though you cannot track, register, or document these actions, they are significant. Lightning seems to have great significance because of its bright display but gravity is silent, unseen, and much more powerful.

Our chief power lies in our holiness and what it produces in helping others with their relationship to God. If we are to be a light, what we do should be good works that glorify God. And, if goodness is evident in your life, people receive it. If truth is present, people honor it. The result of living a righteous life as a natural outflow of the heart will be a person who is welcomed by God to be His instrument for righteousness having great joy as a result of learning to be good repenters.

Appendix One

These Scriptures are the result of a detailed study of this subject. After reading and studying these Scriptures, I organized the list into several elements of the subject. The list provided is to encourage the reader to further examine the truths in this book from the direct source—God’s Word.

SUPPORTIVE SCRIPTURES RELATED TO CHAPTER THREE—*THE WRONGNESS OF SIN*

Sin: Admitting

Ex. 9:27 And Pharaoh sent and called for Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “I have **sinned** this time. The LORD *is* righteous, and my people and I *are* wicked.

Rom. 3:23 for all have **sinned** and fall short of the glory of God,

Sin: Against God

Ex. 10:16 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste, and said, “I have **sinned** against the LORD your God and against you.

Josh. 7:20 And Achan answered Joshua and said, “Indeed I have **sinned** against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done:

Judg. 10:10 And the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, saying, “We have **sinned** against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!”

1 Sam. 15:24 Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have **sinned**, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

Psa. 51:4 Against You, You only, have I **sinned**, and done *this* evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, *and* blameless when You judge.

Jn. 15:24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no **sin**; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.

Jn. 16:8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of **sin**, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Sin: All Sin

1 Kings 8:46 “When they **sin** against You (for *there is* no one who does not **sin**), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to the land of the enemy, far or near;

2 Chr. 6:36 “When they **sin** against You (for *there is* no one who does not **sin**), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to a land far or near;

Prov. 20:9 Who can say, “I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my **sin**”?

Ecc1. 7:20 For *there is* not a just man on earth who does good And does not **sin**.

John 8:7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without **sin** among you, let him throw a stone at her first.”

John 15:22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no **sin**, but now they have no excuse for their **sin**.

Rom. 3:9 What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under **sin**.

Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all **sinned**—

Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man **sin** entered the world, and death through **sin**, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no **sin**, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Sin: Causes God to Destroy

Gen. 18:20 And the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their **sin** is very grave,

Ex. 32:31 Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Oh, these people have committed a great **sin**, and have made for themselves a god of gold!

Ex. 32:32 Yet now, if You will forgive their **sin**—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.”

Ex. 32:34 Now therefore, go, lead the people to *the place* of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their **sin**.”

Deut. 9:18 And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your **sin** which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

Sin: Cost of...(Results of)

Ex. 32:33 And the LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has **sinned** against Me, I will blot him out of My book.

Num. 5:7 then he shall confess the **sin** which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, plus one-fifth of it, and give *it* to the one he has wronged.

Deut. 24:16 “Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* children, nor shall children be put to death for *their* fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own **sin**.

1 Kings 8:35 “When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their **sin** because You afflict them,

2 Chr. 6:26 “When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their **sin** because You afflict them,

2 Chr. 6:27 then hear *in* heaven, and forgive the **sin** of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance.

Psa. 38:18 For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my **sin**.

Psa. 59:12 *For* the **sin** of their mouth *and* the words of their lips, Let them even be taken in their pride, And for the cursing and lying *which* they speak.

Prov. 5:22 His own iniquities entrap the wicked *man*, And he is caught in the cords of his **sin**.

Prov. 10:16 The labor of the righteous *leads* to life, The wages of the wicked to **sin**.

Prov. 14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation, But **sin** *is* a reproach to *any* people.

Ezek. 3:20 “Again, when a righteous *man* turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his **sin**, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.

Matt. 5:29 If your right eye causes you to **sin**, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Matt. 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to **sin**, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Matt. 12:31 “Therefore I say to you, every **sin** and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

Matt. 18:6 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to **sin**, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Matt. 18:8 “If your hand or foot causes you to **sin**, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.

Matt. 18:9 And if your eye causes you to **sin**, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

Mark 9:43 If your hand causes you to **sin**, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—

Mark 9:45 And if your foot causes you to **sin**, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—

Mark 9:47 And if your eye causes you to **sin**, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits **sin** is a slave of **sin**.

John 9:41 Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no **sin**; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your **sin** remains.

Rom. 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man **sin** entered the world, and death through **sin**, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Rom. 6:23 For the wages of **sin** *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our LORD.

Rom. 7:11 For **sin**, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed *me*.

Rom. 7:13 Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But **sin**, that it might appear **sin**, was producing death in me through what is good, so that **sin** through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.

1 Cor. 15:56 The sting of death *is* **sin**, and the strength of **sin** *is* the law.

Heb. 3:13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called “*Today*,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of **sin**.

James 1:15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to **sin**; and **sin**, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Sin: If You Do Not Do Well:

Gen. 4:7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, **sin** lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.”

Ezek. 3:21 Nevertheless if you warn the righteous *man* that the righteous should not **sin**, and he does not **sin**, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul.”

Sin: Known Among People

Deut. 19:15 “One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any **sin** that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

Sin: Law Of

Rom. 5:13 (For until the law **sin** was in the world, but **sin** is not imputed when there is no law.

Rom. 5:20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where **sin** abounded, grace abounded much more,

Rom. 7:7 What shall we say then? *Is* the law **sin**? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known **sin** except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “*You shall not covet.*”

Rom. 7:8 But **sin**, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law **sin** *was* dead.

Rom. 7:9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, **sin** revived and I died.

Rom. 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under **sin**.

Rom. 7:17 But now, *it is* no longer I who do it, but **sin** that dwells in me.

Rom. 7:20 Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but **sin** that dwells in me.

Rom. 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of **sin** which is in my members.

Rom. 7:25 I thank God—through Jesus Christ our LORD! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of **sin**.

1 John 3:4 Whoever commits **sin** also commits lawlessness, and **sin** is lawlessness.

Sin: Rebellion

1 Sam. 15:23 For rebellion *is as* the **sin** of witchcraft, And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from *being* king.”

Sin: Recognition of

Psa. 4:4 Be angry, and do not **sin**. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still.

Psa. 32:5 I acknowledged my **sin** to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” And You forgave the iniquity of my **sin**. Selah

Psa. 38:18 For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my **sin**.

Psa. 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my **sin** *is* always before me.

Jer. 17:1 “The **sin** of Judah *is* written with a pen of iron; With the point of a diamond *it is* engraved On the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of your altars,

Rom. 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of **sin**.

Gal. 3:22 But the Scripture has confined all under **sin**, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Appendix Two

These Scriptures are the result of a detailed study of this subject. After reading and studying these Scriptures, I organized the list into several elements of the subject. The list provided is to encourage the reader to further examine the truths in this book from the direct source—God’s Word.

SUPPORTIVE SCRIPTURES RELATED TO CHAPTER FOUR—*GODLY SORROW*

Sin: Hanging Around Ungodly Has Consequences

Deut. 20:18 lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you **sin** against the LORD your God.

Sin: Ignoring God

Is. 30:1 “Woe to the rebellious children,” says the LORD, “Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add **sin** to **sin**;

Sin: Nature of

Psa. 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in **sin** my mother conceived me.

Prov. 14:9 Fools mock at **sin**, But among the upright *there is* favor.

Sin: Seriousness of

Matt. 5:29 If your right eye causes you to **sin**, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Matt. 5:30 And if your right hand causes you to **sin**, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Matt. 12:31 “Therefore I say to you, every **sin** and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy *against* the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

Matt. 18:6 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to **sin**, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Matt. 18:8 “If your hand or foot causes you to **sin**, cut it off and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.

Matt. 18:9 And if your eye causes you to **sin**, pluck it out and cast *it* from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

Mark 9:43 If your hand causes you to **sin**, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—

Mark 9:45 And if your foot causes you to **sin**, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—

Mark 9:47 And if your eye causes you to **sin**, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—

John 5:14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, “See, you have been made well. **Sin** no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.”

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits **sin** is a slave of **sin**.

Rom. 6:23 For the wages of **sin** *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our LORD.

Appendix Three

These Scriptures are the result of a detailed study of this subject. After reading and studying these Scriptures, I organized the list into several elements of the subject. The list provided is to encourage the reader to further examine the truths in this book from the direct source—God’s Word.

SUPPORTIVE SCRIPTURES RELATED TO CHAPTER FIVE—*GOD FORGIVE ME*

Sin: Conviction

Num. 32:23 But if you do not do so, then take note, you have **sinned** against the LORD; and be sure your sin will find you out.

2 Sam. 24:10 And David’s heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, “I have **sinned** greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly.”

Job 13:23 How many *are* my iniquities and sins? Make me know my transgression and my **sin**.

Psa. 38:3 *There is* no soundness in my flesh Because of Your anger, Nor *any* health in my bones Because of my **sin**.

Psa. 38:18 For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my **sin**.

Psa. 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my **sin** *is* always before me.

Jer. 17:1 “The **sin** of Judah *is* written with a pen of iron; with the point of a diamond *it is* engraved on the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of your altars,

John 16:8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of **sin**, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

John 16:9 of **sin**, because they do not believe in Me;

Sin: Forgiveness of

Ex. 34:7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and **sin**, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

1 Sam. 15:25 Now therefore, please pardon my **sin**, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD."

1 Kings 8:36 then hear in heaven, and forgive the **sin** of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance.

Psa. 32:5 I acknowledged my **sin** to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave the iniquity of my **sin**.

Jer. 31:34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their **sin** I will remember no more."

Matt. 18:21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "LORD, how often shall my brother **sin** against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

John 8:11 She said, "No one, LORD." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and **sin** no more."

Sin: Provision for

Is. 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for **sin**, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

Is. 53:12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the **sin** of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.

Jer. 31:34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their **sin** I will remember no more."

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the **sin** of the world!

Rom. 4:8 *Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute **sin**.*"

Rom. 5:20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where **sin** abounded, grace abounded much more,

Rom. 5:21 so that as **sin** reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our LORD.

Rom. 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in **sin** that grace may abound?

Rom. 6:2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to **sin** live any longer in it?

Rom. 6:6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of **sin** might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of **sin**.

Rom. 6:7 For he who has died has been freed from **sin**.

Rom. 6:10 For *the death* that He died, He died to **sin** once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God.

Rom. 6:14 For **sin** shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Rom. 6:15 What then? Shall we **sin** because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

Rom. 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of **sin leading** to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?

Rom. 6:17 But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of **sin**, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

Rom. 6:18 And having been set free from **sin**, you became slaves of righteousness.

Rom. 6:20 For when you were slaves of **sin**, you were free in regard to righteousness.

Rom. 6:22 But now having been set free from **sin**, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of **sin** and death.

Rom. 8:3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of **sin**: He condemned **sin** in the flesh,

Rom. 8:10 And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of **sin**, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

1 Cor. 15:34 Awake to righteousness, and do not **sin**; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame.

2 Cor. 5:21 For He made Him who knew no **sin** *to be sin* for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without **sin**.

Heb. 9:26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away **sin** by the sacrifice of Himself.

Heb. 9:28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from **sin**, for salvation.

Heb. 12:1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the **sin** which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

1 Pet. 4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from **sin**,

1 John 2:1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not **sin**. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

1 John 3:5 And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no **sin**.

1 John 3:6 Whoever abides in Him does not **sin**. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all **sin**.

1 John 3:9 Whoever has been born of God does not **sin**, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot **sin**, because he has been born of God.

1 John 5:18 We know that whoever is born of God does not **sin**; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

Appendix Four

These Scriptures are the result of a detailed study of this subject. After reading and studying these Scriptures, I organized the list into several elements of the subject. The list provided is to encourage the reader to further examine the truths in this book from the direct source—God’s Word.

SUPPORTIVE SCRIPTURES RELATED TO CHAPTER SIX—*GOD CLEANSE ME*

Sin: Blessing of Repentance

1 Sam. 15:30 Then he said, “I have **sinned**; *yet* honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD your God.”

2 Chr. 6:25 then hear from heaven and forgive the **sin** of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to them and their fathers.

2 Chr. 6:26 “When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their **sin** because You afflict them,

2 Chr. 6:27 then hear *in* heaven, and forgive the **sin** of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance.

2 Chr. 7:14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their **sin** and heal their land.

Psa. 32:1 Blessed *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven, *Whose* **sin** *is* covered.

Sin: Cleansing of

Psa. 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my **sin**.

Psa. 85:2 You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their **sin**.

Psa. 85:2 You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their **sin**.

Is. 6:7 And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your **sin** purged.”

Is. 27:9 Therefore by this the iniquity of Jacob will be covered; And this *is* all the fruit of taking away his **sin**: When he makes all the stones of the altar Like chalkstones that are beaten to dust, Wooden images and incense altars shall not stand.

Sin: God’s Mercy

Ex. 34:7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and **sin**, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.”

Ex. 34:9 Then he said, “If now I have found grace in Your sight, O LORD, let my LORD, I pray, go among us, even though we *are* a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our **sin**, and take us as Your inheritance.”

Sin: Specific sins

Deut. 23:22 But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be **sin** to you.

Deut. 24:4 *then* her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that *is* an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring **sin** on the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance.

Prov. 21:4 A haughty look, a proud heart, *And* the plowing of the wicked *are* **sin**.

Prov. 24:9 The devising of foolishness *is* **sin**, And the scoffer *is* an abomination to men.

Is. 27:9 Therefore by this the iniquity of Jacob will be covered; And this *is* all the fruit of taking away his **sin**: When he makes all the stones of the altar Like chalkstones that are beaten to dust, Wooden images and incense altars shall not stand.

Is. 30:1 “Woe to the rebellious children,” says the LORD, “Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add **sin** to **sin**;

1 Sam. 12:23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should **sin** against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.

Eph. 4:26 “*Be angry, and do not **sin***”: *do not let the sun go down on your wrath,*

Rom. 14:23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *he does* not eat from faith; for whatever *is* not from faith is **sin**.

1 Cor. 6:18 Flee sexual immorality. Every **sin** that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

1 Cor. 8:12 But when you thus **sin** against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you **sin** against Christ.

James 2:9 but if you show partiality, you commit **sin**, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

James 4:17 Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is **sin**.

2 Pet. 2:14 having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from **sin**, enticing unstable souls. *They have* a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children.

1 John 5:16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a **sin** *which does not lead* to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit **sin** not *leading* to death. There is **sin** *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.

1 John 5:17 All unrighteousness is **sin**, and there is **sin** not *leading* to death.

Appendix Five

These Scriptures are the result of a detailed study of this subject. After reading and studying these Scriptures, I organized the list into several elements of the subject. The list provided is to encourage the reader to further examine the truths in this book from the direct source—God’s Word.

SUPPORTIVE SCRIPTURES RELATED TO CHAPTER SEVEN—*GOD EMPOWER ME*

Sin: Die to

Rom. 6:11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to **sin**, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our LORD.

Rom. 6:12 Therefore do not let **sin** reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

Rom. 6:13 And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to **sin**, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.

Sin: Prevention of

Psa. 39:1 I said, “I will guard my ways, Lest I **sin** with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me.”

Psa. 119:11 Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not **sin** against You.

Prov. 10:19 In the multitude of words **sin** is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips *is* wise.

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